

*From reporting to retracting in Domestic Violence:
Mapping victim decision-making as they journey
through the Criminal Justice System.*

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Abstract

Domestic violence (DV) is a problem that continues to blight many victims' lives and puzzle those agencies offering support in terms of establishing the most effective intervention strategies. Policing DV from a positive action policy framework poses complications for victims' decision-making around reporting and retracting their complaints of abuse.

The work delineated in this thesis examines victims' decision-making behaviour through the medium of a thematic analysis of initial and retraction statements provided to Greater Manchester Police. It is the first time DV victim statements have been analysed in this manner for the purpose of gaining further insights into understanding their decision-making behaviour. A total of 240 statements, both initial and retraction statements from female victims and male abusers are included in the analysis. In analysing these documents, new insights are gained into reasons pertaining to victims' decisions to report and leave their abusive relationships as captured in the initial statements. The main themes of the initial statements focus on decisions concerning the reporting and leaving of their abusers. More minor themes (in terms of their frequency of occurrence) highlight victims' feelings about their abusers, how they manage their safety and the various forms of dissonance that influence and at times impede the decision-making process. The cognitive dissonance theory is used as a theoretical framework from which to understand some of the decisions captured in the data.

Subsequent analyses are conducted to establish if there are any differences between the initial statements that do not result in a subsequent retraction statement and those that are retracted. Those victims who do not retract their statements show higher levels of fear, are already separated, and more of these victims are employed compared to the women who retracted their initial statements.

The penultimate part of the thesis explores the motivations of victims for retracting their statements. Two main categories were found: external and internal reasons with sub-themes relating to each of the two categories.

Finally, suggestions for a content-based statement taking framework are offered and implications for intervention strategies are made based on the findings.

Keywords: Decision-making, Domestic violence, Fear, Interviewing, Policy recommendations, Positive action policy, Cognitive dissonance, Retraction, Thematic analysis

Preface:

In August 2018, I resigned as a serving police officer for Greater Manchester Police (GMP). I joined the force in 2005 where I completed 3 years on front line policing duties in response and neighbourhood policing before moving onto the hate crime unit. Following this, I worked in the Child Protection Unit and then the Domestic Violence Unit. In 2012, I took a 5 year career break from the police in order to commence my PhD. I then returned to GMP in 2017 where I spent a year conducting research on hate crime and the policing of mental health.

I began thinking about the effect of the positive action policy and retraction during a standard DV case I had been investigating as a police officer whilst working in the DV unit. I had taken the victim's initial statement detailing her abusive relationship and the most recent incident. The case had been investigated to the point where the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) had decided to charge the alleged abuser. The case was due to appear in court the following day when I received a phone call from the victim informing me she wished to retract her statement. I felt immediately disappointed and frustrated at the timing of her retraction statement, given I had spent quite a few months building up the evidence against her alleged abuser. Regardless of my sentiments, and despite trying to persuade the victim otherwise, I took her retraction statement and informed the CPS of the matter. I also told the victim she would still be required to attend court. The following day, she did not appear at the time of the court hearing and the CPS decided to issue a witness summons to force the victim to attend court. It was then my job to arrest and bring her to court. I attended at the victim's home address, informed her of the witness summons, and arrested her. At the point of arrest, I had to place handcuffs on the witness and place her in the back of the van to transport her to court. She was then positioned into the witness box where questions were put to her, all of which were answered with "no comment." It was only until the line of questioning had been exhausted that the victim told the court "I don't care what you do, but that man over there is the one I love and the one I want to be with." Observing this victim from the back of the court room made me consider how long it would take her to pick up the phone again in order to report any future abusive episodes, how this would affect her opinion of the police and Criminal

Justice System (CJS), and what the point was of the positive action policy and the retraction process, particularly if this is the place where a victim could ultimately end up. This story triggered the exploration of the positive action policy in DV cases, particularly those where retraction has occurred and initiated the research proposal that led to my writing this thesis.

In my days of policing DV, common phrases when officers read an initial DV statement would be ones such as “*This has retraction written all over it.*” I remember when faced with a victim who seemed to show signs of heading towards retracting her statement, feeling jaded and somewhat frustrated at the idea of it. When I started to read the initial statements for the purposes of this thesis, I also found myself thinking the same thing, that retraction seemed very apparent in some statements but not others. This led me to try and establish if signs of retraction could be discerned within initial statements.

During my time spent as a serving police officer, I took countless DV statements from victims, both as a front-line constable and later as a specialist officer working in the DV unit of one of the largest police forces in the UK. In my experience as a police officer, at times convincing the victim to give a statement mirrored the process of a hard sale situation. Even when taking the statement, many times a victim would falter towards not wanting to go ahead in detailing the abuse and providing a statement. Having taken the statement and upon the return to the station, one of the first questions consistently posed by my line managers would typically be framed as follows “*Did you manage to get a signed statement and do you think she’s on board or not?*” In essence, the latter part of this question pertained to asking the officer whether or not they had detected any signs of the victims either heading towards the road of retraction or remaining committed to embarking on the CJS process.

I remember clearly whilst working as a police officer, if news was received of a retraction statement, officers would often make a joke of it and shout in a mocking tone “*But I love him*”...insinuating that was the reason for the retraction and the tone in which it was said, it very much depicted the victim in a negative, dependent light and as being led by their emotions in a state of learned helplessness with no other choice but to return to the abuser. This mocking mantra “*but I love him*”, probably unbeknown to the officers, situated the victims in the rather dated view point of DV victims as battered wife/person syndrome- helpless and addicted to their relationships.

Assimilating all of the above described experiences of my policing days, forms the basis of this thesis and produces an informed critique of the policy that underpins the policing of DV, the processes of obtaining information from DV victims in terms of statement taking, and the process of retraction and the implications this has for victims and police officers respectively.

CHAPTER 1: Policing Domestic Violence

1.1 Introduction

The policing of Domestic Violence (DV) has changed and developed extensively since the feminist movement first started putting pressure on government to take DV seriously in the 1970s. Yet, as this thesis will highlight, there has been little change in the occurrence of DV incidents. We are, for example, still quoting the same figures for the frequency of occurrence of DV incidents as we were over 30 years ago. The figures are startling: on average, two women per week are killed by their abusers (Office for National Statistics, 2016), and on average 100 calls received every hour (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2015).

Increasingly, DV has assumed a position of priority, importance and focus in the UK political agenda. Since I started the thesis in October 2012, some of the major legal changes designed to address the needs of DV victims include Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs), Clare's Law, lowering the age of victims to 16, and the coercive and controlling behaviour legislation, introduced under Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. All such changes amount to attempts to alleviate the inherent difficulty of policing DV within the context of the CJS.

1.2 Research questions

This thesis focuses on victims' decision-making contained within DV statements with particular focus on the moment of retraction, and in doing so asks the following questions:

1. Making sense of the decision to retract: What are the emergent themes evident in an initial DV statement?
2. Are there any salient recognisable differences in the initial statements provided by those victims who continue to engage and those victims who then go on to provide a retraction statement? Of those differences identified, do they form any discernible patterns that would reveal the motivation for the subsequent retraction?
3. Is retraction purely driven by the emotions the victim has for the abuser?

4. What are the reasons victims decide to disengage from the CJS?

1.3 Aim

To further the understanding of the previously under-researched area of retraction following an initial statement of DV constitutes the main aim of this thesis. By using police victim statements, it approaches retraction in DV from a new perspective that has not, as yet, been explored. The motivation for the approach came from the evidence that victims of DV are notoriously difficult to recruit for face-to-face interviews/focus groups, etc., (Dutton *et al.*, 2003). Even if they engage with researchers, there is often a time delay. With the statements, however, we capture the victim's narrative very soon after the abusive incident has occurred and/or the decision to retract has been made. Thus, the intention of analysing these statements is four-fold:

1. To contribute towards the existing research around the decision-making of DV victims.
2. To provide the police with fresh insights into retraction and offer suggestions for the identification of a victim showing a propensity towards retraction within her initial statement.
3. To provide suggestions as to whether the current framework for and content of a DV statement is sufficient to capture a comprehensive overview of the victim's journey that has brought her to provide the statement and/or subsequently retract it.
4. To explore the imbalance between policy developments and ongoing, unchanging prevalence of DV by focusing on the issue of reporting and retraction.

1.4 Prevalence of DV in UK

An estimated 1.9 million adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2017 (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2018). Of these, 1.2 million were women and 713, 000 men. (ONS, 2017). Moreover, 4.3 million women have experienced domestic abuse at some point since the age of 16 (ONS, 2017). In the year ending March 2017, police recorded data show the number of combined DV incidents and offences across England and Wales as

being 1,068,020 per year and for Greater Manchester Police (GMP) amounting to 67,987 per year. GMP has the second highest rate of DV incidents and offences after the combined Metropolitan and City of London Police. The third highest was recorded by West Midlands Police (ONS, 2017). Furthermore, in the latest figures of the year ending March 2017, DV constituted 10% of the total crime figures, which was an increase of 2% since the previous year. According to the ONS (2017):

The police recorded 1.1 million domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes in the year ending March 2017 and of these, 46% were recorded as domestic abuse-related crimes; domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police accounted for 32% of violent crimes.

1.5 Financial costs

Domestic violence and abuse cost the UK an estimated £15.7 billion in 2008 (Walby, 2009). This figure included over £3.9 billion for the CJS, civil legal services, healthcare, social services, housing and refuges. Additionally, more than £1.9 billion is incurred in costs for the economy due to time off work because of injuries and almost £9.9 billion in terms of human and emotional costs. The overall cost includes those involved in investigating domestic murders and attempted murders, threatening behaviour, and redressing the subsequent pain, suffering and fear caused. (National Institute Health Care and Excellence [NICE], 2014).

Thorns (2003) in Walby and Allen (2004), provides an estimate of costs per incident. Given that DV does not constitute a specific offence, attempts at providing estimates of the cost of policing an incident of DV remain problematic. Table 1:1 provides an overview of costs incurred by various agencies that form part of the CJS per incident across: homicide, serious wounding, other, all wounding which covers the average of serious and other wounding, common assault and sexual offences. Thus, if we take the example of all wounding an average of serious and other wounding, in terms of police activity per incident, it is estimated to cost £1062, whereas for a common assault it is much less at £90. In terms of estimating which of those crimes are DV related, Walby (2004) provides a figure of 22% derived from estimates calculated by the Metropolitan Police. Thus, 22% violence against the person

and sexual offences are committed by intimates where 19% of those were female victims.

CJS activity	Homicide wounding	Serious wounding	Other	All wounding (average of serious and other wounding)	Common assault	Sexual offences
Prosecution	410	250	20	50	5	60
Magistrates court	100	60	6	10	1	7
Crown court	720	440	40	90	9	180
Jury service	90	60	5	10	1	20
Legal aid	1100	650	60	130	10	200
Probation service	430	260	20	50	5	60
Prison service	4,200	2,600	240	520	50	1,200
Other CJS costs	1,700	1,100	100	220	20	160
Criminal injuries compensation administration	2,000	1,200	110	250	20	
Cost of non- police elements per incident	11,000	6,770	611	1,360	125	1937
Police activity	107,299	2,357	389	1,062	90	1,900
Total CJS cost per incident	118,299	9,127	1,000	2,422	215	3,837

Table 1:1. Criminal justice system costs in £ for violent crime incidents. Based on Walby (2004, p.42).

In terms of retraction, to date no figures have been found indicating the cost of retraction, and this would depend on when the retraction was received.

Retraction requests can be received a few hours after the initial statements have been obtained, following the arrest of the abuser, during the period leading up to the court case, and at times, on the actual day of the trial. In addition, given the positive action policy described in detail in Chapter 3, it remains unclear the

effect a retraction has in terms of proceeding with the case. A retraction received on the day of the trial will have incurred more costs in police time in investigating the case compared to a retraction received a few hours following the initial statement being obtained. This is, however, dependent on whether the positive action policy is implemented and the case continues to be investigated despite the retraction statement provided by the victim, or whether it is dropped at the point of the retraction statement being received.

Having discussed the difficulties in estimating the specific costs pertaining to a victim retracting, we turn now to another area that has proven to be problematic in DV research: that of defining and justifying the terminology used in DV research (e.g., victim versus survivor, whether male or female victim, whether DV or intimate partner violence etc.).

1.6 Victim/survivor

Throughout this thesis, reference will be made to ‘victims’ and ‘abusers’. Much debate exists around the terms victim, survivor and person/woman/man who has experienced violence in the extant literature on DV. Whilst not wanting to get drawn into the extensive deliberations around the appropriate terms of reference, I feel it is important to define those used within this thesis.

According to Women’s Aid (2017): “The terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ are both used, depending on the context. Survivor is, however, preferred as it emphasises an active, resourceful and creative response to the abuse, in contrast to victim, which implies passive acceptance.” However, the term victim has been chosen throughout this thesis as it is used within policing environments and the Ministry of Justice (2015) Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. ‘Victim’ was also the term I was used to when I started the thesis. By choosing the term victim, I do not, however, intend it to refer in any way to passive beings. Moreover, my research findings reflect victims being women with a strong sense of agency. In terms of the distinction between abuser and offender, abuser is chosen as it was felt this was a better overall fit for describing them both in their violent and non-violent behaviour.

1.7 Female only victims, male only abusers

Reference will be made exclusively to female victims and male abusers.

Statistics show women experience on average twice as much abuse and are far more likely to suffer the most serious forms of abuse (College of Policing, 2018). Not only are women more likely to become victims of DV, but once they have experienced it, their chances of becoming repeat victims are much higher compared to men: 32% of women who had ever experienced DV were repeatedly abused four or five (or more) times, compared with 11% of repeat male victims; high levels (4 times or more) of repeated DV were experienced by 89% of women (Walby & Allen, 2004). Moreover, 70 % of domestic homicide victims were females between April 2013 and March 2016. Women were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse than men (7.5% compared with 4.3%), which translates to an estimated 1.2 million female victims and 713,000 male victims (ONS, 2017). Finally, pertinent to this thesis, DV by men against women engenders more fear (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Hester, 2009; Walby & Allen, 2004), and the type of abuse women are subjected to is such that it creates higher levels of fear, more severe injuries and graver consequences (Cascardi, Langhinrichsen & Vivian, 1992; Walby & Towers, 2017.) With the dynamics and frequency of the abuse differing to such an extent, it is counterintuitive to study both male and female victims unless for direct comparative purposes, which is not a point of interest of or the purpose of this thesis. A further issue that demands clarification is the terminology employed throughout this thesis and the reasons pertaining to this. The following section address the justification of using the term 'Domestic violence'.

1.8 Domestic violence defined

The terms domestic violence (DV), domestic abuse, intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, intimate terrorism and violence against women are used to describe forms of aggression that have, or possess the potential to exert an impact (e.g., fear, distress, injury; see Heyman & Slep, 2006). The term DV is chosen over and above the other aforementioned terms of reference for similar reasons as for choosing the term victim, namely, that of it being commonly used within policing environments.

DV will be taken to mean the following according to a cross-government definition:

... any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional consequences (gov.uk, 2019).

We turn now to defining the term retraction and highlighting the reason for choosing this term over and above other terms available.

1.9 Retraction

In terms of a victim deciding they do not want to proceed with the prosecution, there are several terms used: retraction, disengagement, recantation, and withdrawal of support. Retraction is the chosen phrase used in the thesis, again for reasons of familiarity and its use in policing contexts.

Retraction accounted for just under one-quarter (24%) of unsuccessful prosecutions. In 2017, 54% of unsuccessful prosecutions were due to either victim retraction, victim non-attendance or evidence of the victim not supporting the case (ONS, 2017). Notwithstanding the economic cost, it is pertinent to address the issue of retraction in more detail both from a practitioner and academic perspective, given the high percentage of cases that are halted due to victim retraction/non-attendance.

According to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, in terms of victims not supporting prosecutions, they state the following:

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have highlighted the increasing proportion of domestic abuse cases that are closed due to evidential difficulties, where the victim does not support action, as an area of improvement for some police forces. They state that clear standards for building a case for the victim would increase the likelihood of victims engaging with the criminal justice system (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk, 2017).

Evidential difficulties in terms of the victim not supporting a prosecution rose from 36% to 41% from 2016 to 2017 (ONS, 2017).

These figures need to be set in a context in which cuts in funding for front-line resources in DV are part of the story in order to explain victims disengaging from the CJS. For example, 17% of specialist women's refuges were forced to close between 2010 and 2014 (Women's Aid, 2017). On an average day, 230 women seeking emergency refuge space were turned away (Baird, 2012).

In terms of retraction, to date no figures have to been found indicating the cost of retraction, which depends on when the retraction was received. Thus, retraction requests can be received a few hours after the initial statements have been obtained, following the arrest of the abuser, during the period of time leading up to the court case, and at times, on the actual day of the trial. A retraction received on the day of the trial could incur more costs in police time investigating the case compared to a retraction received a few hours following the initial statement being obtained. This is dependent upon whether the case is dropped following the receipt of a retraction statement or whether the positive action policy is pursued, and the case progresses to court.

The data used in this thesis were obtained from analysing victim statements. The 'mechanics' of how these statements were obtained in terms of the framework used is discussed in the following section.

1.10 Interviewing witnesses: PEACE interviewing framework

The introduction of the PEACE interviewing training programme in 1992 changed the way in which police conducted interviews with victims, witnesses and suspects (see more on the history in Chapter 2). One of the benefits, as set out by the College of Policing is to: "Increase public confidence in the police service, particularly with witnesses and victims of crimes who come into direct contact with the police." (www.app.college.police.uk, n.d.)

Figure 1.1 details the benefits as outlined by the College of Policing of following the PEACE framework in interviewing victims and abusers of crime.



Figure 1.1 The benefits of the PEACE framework.

The PEACE framework provides the police with a step-by-step procedure on suspect, witness and victim interviewing to ensure a standardised method is used in obtaining information for the purposes of evidence gathering. PEACE stands for Planning and Preparation, Engage and explain, Account clarification and challenge, Closure and Evaluation. In terms of the structure of the overall interview, the College of Policing advocate a free recall approach to avoid interruptions, avoid multiple questions and reflect back what the witness has said (see Appendix 2 for a full list).

Specific guidance from the College of Policing on taking witness statements seems somewhat limited compared to that of interviewing. This is, in part, because statement taking is incorporated into the same PEACE framework with the end result being a statement that is written as opposed to a recorded interview. The College of Policing states the following regarding the procedures of obtaining statements:

Police officers are required to produce a statement from an interview conducted with a witness. Statements may be taken at the scene immediately following an incident or at a later time or place, e.g. at a police station, the witness's home or another location. Investigators must be properly prepared. Any notes that are made must be retained, as the prosecution may need to disclose any unused material. The interviewer should ensure that the witness statement accurately reflects what the witness has said. The interviewer must also consider the

relevant points to prove for the offence in question.

(<https://www.app.college.police.uk>, n.d.)

Worthy of emphasis given the focus of this thesis, is the lack of any specific guidance to obtaining statements from DV victims. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 9, this thesis will argue that a generalised approach to statement taking from DV victims is not the most effective way of obtaining the maximum information from them. Rather, it is argued that a specific DV statement taking framework would enhance this point of interaction with a DV victim and thereby maximise the information provided by the victim.

Having introduced the PEACE framework to provide a foundation of understanding of the mechanics around how statements are obtained from victims, the following section will address the outlines of the remaining chapters.

1.11 Outline of chapters

Chapter 2: *From stray dogs to zero tolerance: Documenting the main themes of DV legislation from the 1970s until the present day* provides an overview of the main policies since the 1970s when DV first came to the political forefront and evaluates the main changes and developments in policy over the subsequent five decades.

Chapter 3: *Making sense of DV victims' decision-making* explores the influence the positive action policy has on victim decision-making and reviews the literature on victim-decision making in general and specifically that of DV victims. The cognitive dissonance theory is reviewed as a foundation from which to understand some of the decisions victims make in navigating their abusive relationships.

Chapter 4: *Methodology: Researching retraction* consists of an overview of the qualitative methods employed to carry out the research and the process by which the data was gathered and analysed. Reflexive insights into the position of the researcher in relation to this thesis are discussed.

Chapter 5: *Along the right lines* is the first part of the analysis that explores the narratives contained within a victim's initial statement. Never previously analysed, the purpose of this is to uncover what can be garnered from these accounts contained within the statements. Decisions discussed around leaving and reporting their abusers proffer further insights into DV victims' decision-making.

Chapter 6: *All aboard the prosecuting train: What factors might be indicative of retraction?* commences the second part of the analysis by considering how a decision to retract can be detected in an initial statement. To do so, comparisons are made between initial statements made by victims who do go on to retract and those who do not.

Chapter 7: *Remonstrating retraction* elucidates the meaning of retraction in terms of the motivations for disengaging from the CJS and how the variability of such motives can translate into policy implications.

Chapter 8: *Identifying the who and what in fear: Victims' expressions, objects and effects of fear on their decision-making process: Summary of the main findings on fear.* The findings on fear that featured in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are discussed and summarised, resulting in a model of fear depicted in an accessible and visual representation of how fear influences victims' decision-making processes. The chapter concludes by making recommendations for practice in interpreting the findings on fear.

Chapter 9: *Reiterating retraction: Summary of main findings and implications for practice* discusses the relevance of the findings in light of existing literature. Key messages from the data chapters 5 to 8 are revisited and general limitations of the thesis are discussed, a statement taking framework is proposed, and possible suggestions for further research are outlined.

CHAPTER 2: From stray dogs to zero tolerance: Documenting the main themes of DV legislation from the 1970s until the present day

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the major developments and initiatives in the implementation of policies for police and other agencies involved in tackling DV. It seeks to answer the following question:

What lessons can be learned from reviewing policy over the past 50 years? In this respect, can the emergence and further developments of governmental policy and legislation enable improvements in the policing of DV?

Figure 2.1 depicts some of these developments across the past five decades. The growth of legislation and policy is apparent particularly around the 1990s and 2000-2010 decades where they expanded considerably.

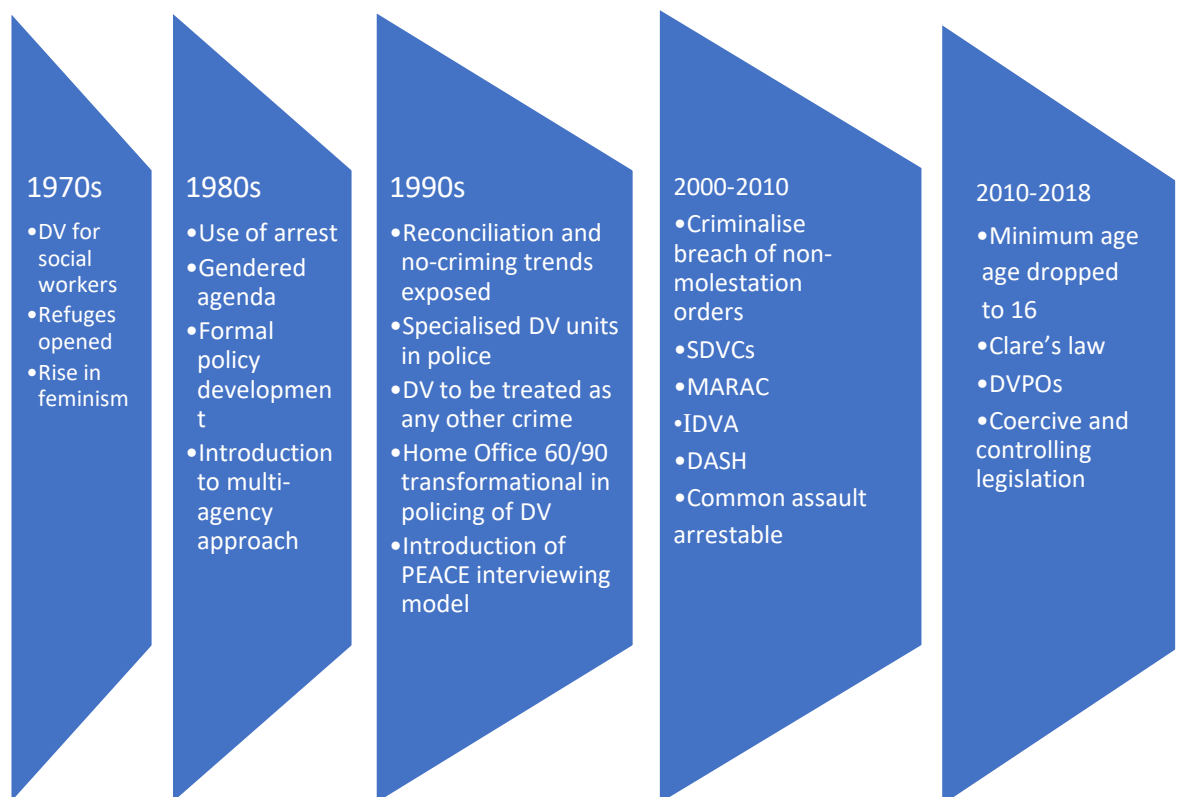


Figure 2.1. A diagrammatic overview of five decades of DV policy development.

What follows is a chronological overview of DV policies from 1970s to the present day. Backed by the chronological overview in Figure 2.1, the aim of this chapter is to delve into the process of change in DV policy as reflected in the shift of public attitudes towards DV and governmental motivations for varying approaches to DV. The incremental legislative changes introduced over the past five decades reflect the growing political importance DV has gained. A detailed account of the major policy and legislation changes and implementations provide a robust policy framework from which to understand the main research questions posed in this thesis. It allows the reader a broad and in-depth context within which to situate the main policy in question, namely, that of positive action policy.

In providing this detailed overview of the past five decades in DV policy, it sets the scene for two key points put forward in this thesis: 1) Increasing legislation is not necessarily the answer in providing better support for DV victims despite it demonstrating an increased importance on the political agenda, and 2) The main policy critiqued in this thesis is the positive action policy that first appeared in 1984, following the seminal experiment by Sherman and Berk (1984) (see Chapter 3 for further details on this policy). It is therefore important to understand what policy initiatives came before the 1984 study and what occurred following the initiation of this policy.

2.2 1970s

The 1970s saw the creation of women's refuges under the impact of women's liberation movement during this time (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Pizzey, 1974; Rose, 1985). In Britain, refuges were mainly coordinated by Women's Aid federations and often run by women on a voluntary basis with very little funding backing them. Policies, laws and interventions for the purpose of combatting DV were sparse and almost non-existent. Indeed, prior to the 1977 homeless legislation, women and children who were forced out of their homes due to DV victims not being considered 'homeless', thereby depriving them of any temporary housing as a homeless person would otherwise have access to (Binney, Harkell, & Nixon, 1981, 1985; Malos & Hague, 1993; Rose, 1985). Similarly, social services would regard families where DV was occurring as

“problem families” and policy instructed them to keep the families together, unless clear evidence of child neglect or abuse was evident (Maynard, 1985).

Legislation and policing

Despite the prevailing negative and unsupportive attitudes towards DV in this decade, 1975 saw a major positive development in public policy starting with the Parliamentary Select Committee hearings on *Violence in Marriage*. Chief Police Officers were required to give evidence in support (or lack of) the police’s role in tackling DV. One Chief Police Officer stated:

Whilst such problems take up considerable police time....in the majority of cases the role of the police is a negative one. We are, after all, dealing with persons bound in marriage and it is important, for a host of reasons, to maintain the unity of the spouses. (Parliamentary Select Committee 1975, 366).

Despite senior police officers indicating more importance being placed on the sanctity of marriage than the protection of DV victims, it was the first time the police had been made to answer questions as to how they saw their role in tackling DV. As such, it established foundations for future enquiries, transparency and criticisms into and about their roles. In the face of this negativity towards protecting women from DV, parliament passed some important legislation aimed at helping women abused by their partners and assisting the police in providing an improved service to these victims. The Report recommended that the police keep statistics and that Chief Constables should consider reviewing their policies on DV. It emphasised the importance of treating assaults in the home as seriously as they do elsewhere and that if there was evidence of injury, arrest of the abuser should be considered, but as yet no mandatory policies were suggested. In 1976, as a result of this Report and the continued efforts of women lobbying for changes in policy, married and cohabiting women were able to obtain a court order aimed at preventing further violence and excluding the partner from the marital home under The Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Court Act 1976. Subsequently, two further acts were introduced under which women could also obtain these orders from: The Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates’ Court Act 1978, and the Matrimonial Homes Act 1983. Although a vast improvement and empowering

to women during this time, no effective sanctions were attached to them to discourage the abuser from breaching their conditions. The orders were subsequently labelled as not being worth the paper they were written on (Barron, 1990).

The Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976 (DVMPA) was introduced in order to provide a more effective and accessible remedy for spouses and non-married co-habiting couples to obtain injunction orders to protect against molestation. The Act replaced the Matrimonial Homes Act 1967, which gave the spouse a statutory right of occupation in the matrimonial home thereby disempowering the courts of excluding a house-owning spouse from the matrimonial home completely. The only way in which courts had the power to grant injunctions was if proceedings for divorce, nullity or judicial separation were pending. Police could be involved in the enforcement of injunctions where powers of arrest had been attached and this power was normally only attached where actual bodily harm had taken place. Three types of injunctions were permitted under this act: “ouster” injunctions to exclude a spouse from the matrimonial home, injunctions against molestation, and those to permit a spouse back into the home.

A further two very similar statutes closely followed the 1976 Act: The Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates Courts Act (DPMCA) in 1978 and the Matrimonial Homes Act 1983. Firstly, the DPMCA 1978, differed from the DVMPA in that it only allowed for spouses to seek remedies and not cohabitants. Secondly, the DPMCA only provided remedies against violence and threats of violence and not any against molestation or harassment. Thirdly, although powers of arrest could be attached to orders, they tended not to be for the purpose of refusing a spouse to return to the marital home and for the prevention of threats of violence to the victim or their children. Fourthly, where a power of arrest had been granted, it did not specify that the police had to keep the respondent in custody although it did state that the respondent had to be brought in front of a magistrate within 24 hours. Overall, steps in the right direction were being taken in the 1970s towards recognising the damage caused by DV and the resultant protection a victim might require. Despite this, the lack of police powers created an image of a government waking up to the seriousness of DV without providing adequate police powers to implement effectively the new legislation.

2.3 1980s

Legislation and charities

Despite the police viewing DV as a matter for social services (Sheptycki, 1993) and Women's Aid taking on an increasingly more prevalent role, during the 1970s no clearly defined inter or multi agency policies were in place. Formal policy development on DV by statutory agencies did not begin in most areas until 1980s, and during this time it was mainly in Labour- controlled local authority housing departments. By the mid-80s, however, there was an increase in the number of joint health and social services initiatives. In 1984, a governmental advisory group, the Women's National Commission (WNC), set up a working party to examine the issue of violence against women. The main focus of the group was to try and ensure women going through the criminal justice system received the legal, medical, social and psychological help they needed and to support them in their role as court witnesses (Smith, 1989). Offering such a service of support to female victims of DV reflects the emerging recognition of the difficulty such victims find themselves in at the point of providing evidence in court, torn between their emotions towards the abuser and now having the facility to give evidence against them thereby criminalising their behaviour. Of interest to this thesis would have been establishing how this support service affected reporting and retraction rates of DV victims, however such data were not documented.

The WNC also provided advice and training to police and other professionals to try and ensure the best service was delivered to female victims. Given the attitudes of the police in this decade as expressed by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Kenneth Newman in 1984 "Domestic violence and stray dogs...rubbish work for police officers" (Radford, 1989, p.192), it was clear any help in shifting such attitudes would assist in providing an improved service to DV victims during the 80s.

Legislation and policing

Criticism towards the police of their treatment of female victims was prevalent and on the increase during the 80s, particularly in light of the Peter Sutcliffe murders coupled with the infamous recording from Thames Valley Police of a

gruelling and extremely unsympathetic interview with a rape victim (e.g., Bland, 1992; Smith, 1992). This criticism, concomitant with pressure from the WNC, drove the implementation of a Home Office Circular 69 (1986), which outlined the need for change in the way DV was policed. The 80s saw the commencement of a more gendered agenda of policing priorities. In particular, new procedures outlined for assisting victims of sexual assault now also included DV victims. Numerous other suggestions were made including police forces to set up special victim examination suites, more advice and information for rape victims, follow-up visits and enhanced training for officers who deal with rape victims. With regard to DV specifically, the report recommended good practice on combatting marital violence and ensuring the safety of spouses and children in domestic disputes. Despite these recommendations contained within the report, some argue that this circular had little effect on policy for combatting DV (Edwards, 1989; Freeman, 1987), whereas others contended it did make a difference, particularly in areas where arrest powers were emphasised such as in the Metropolitan Police (Sheptycki, 1993).

Although no new policies were advised in this circular, it did prompt certain police forces to respond positively towards providing an improved service to DV victims. It encouraged a shift towards seeing DV as a policing matter. For example, the Metropolitan Police in 1987 launched a force order encouraging the use of arrest and recommending a multi-agency approach in seeking solutions and initiatives to this form of violence. Similarly, police forces across London and other locations in the country started to set up DV units and adopted a multi-agency approach in order to try and improve the way in which cases of DV were managed.

The 1980s saw a gradual change to DV featuring more on the policing agenda. Once more, the recognition of female victims requiring additional support was evident with suggestions made towards enhancing their journey through the CJS. Despite recommendations to make use of powers of arrest in cases of DV, no real difference was observed. By the end of the 80s, the multi-agency approach was beginning to gain traction and the development of this approach was one of the central foci during the 90s.

2.4 1990s

Legislation and policing

One of the most influential documents published at this time targeting DV was the Home Office circular 60/90 (1990). Having been piloted in London and West Yorkshire, this circular marked the beginning of a transformation in the policing of DV in the UK. It recommended that the police take a more interventionist approach in DV cases with a strong preference towards arrest, that cases of DV should be recorded and investigated in the same way as any other violent crime, and from within specialised DV units. Problems of 'no-criming' DV incidents were exposed as were attempts at reconciliation and interviewing the victim in front of the abuser. Thus, officers were encouraged to record DV crimes properly as they would any other crime. It also urged police to adopt a more sympathetic and understanding attitude towards victims of DV. The circular raised awareness of other types of abuse DV victims could suffer other than just physical (viz., emotional, sexual).

The 60/90 Home Office circular saw the advent of positive action in the UK in terms of having pro-arrest policies in place. Furthermore, it marked the first time the police were advised to actively liaise with other agencies, including those in the voluntary sector thereby representing the launch of a multi-agency approach. As a result of this circular, many police forces developed tailored DV policies adapted from the advice of the circular, which saw the establishment of specialised DV units. The main purpose of these specialised units was to provide support between the period of the offence being reported to the completions of any criminal proceedings. Training was provided across three Northern forces: Merseyside, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire, on the implementation of this circular (Walklate, 1992). However, despite the Home Office stressing the importance of the increased specialism and attention being paid to the issue of DV, little training was in place for other forces elsewhere for the newly appointed specialist Domestic Violence Officers (DVOs). For example, Grace (1995) conducted an in-depth study with three police forces that had taken up the role of a DVO to evaluate the effect the 60/90 circular. Those three forces were: Northamptonshire, South Yorkshire, and West Midlands. Of the 24 DVOs interviewed, 14 had received some training in DV where ten lacked any specialist DV training. Of those who had received some training, ten had had an introductory training course on DV whereas the other four just some counselling and specialist interviewing skills. This parlous state-

of-affairs was captured in the following comment: “Several DVOs described being simply handed the Circular on their first day and told to “get on with it.” (Grace, 1995, p. 29).

In 1992, all but three of the English and Welsh constabularies had developed specialist DV policies and 50 per cent of police forces had developed specialist DV units. Whilst some welcomed the newly established specialised units, there was a lot of criticism towards the lack of resources and understaffing as well as a feeling that the units lacked any importance or status within the police. (Grace, 1995).

The impact of the circular was initially favourable, with Women’s Aid noting the new police approach with victims being better informed and treated with an increased empathy from officers having shed the previous victim-blame attitude. However, it was apparent that shifts in police approaches towards DV were not uniform across the country and differed within forces, where some forces had failed to implement any new policies as a result of the circular (Barron, Harwin & Singh, 1992).

The implementation of this new policy was very much encouraged by government ministers, in particular by John Patten, the then Home Office Minister. Patten urged officers to treat any DV incidents as they would any other crime. Attempts at reconciliation were discouraged and classified as a thing of the past, with these attempts needing to be replaced by the notion of positive action and “criming” the incidents at all times. This was seen to be the best deterrent to prevent abusers from re-offending.

A knock-on effect from this policy was the introduction of cautioning DV abusers for minor offences. Originally trialled by the Metropolitan Police force in Streatham as a pilot scheme, it involved bringing the abusers into custody for a cooling off period of 2-8 hours and then cautioning them for the ‘minor’ offences committed against their partners, despite the partners being unwilling to support any prosecution. Thus, the abuser would have to admit the offence, to having made previous assaults on his partner, and not commit any further offences for subsequent two months during which the victim would be visited on occasion to verify her wellbeing and that no further offences had been committed by the abuser. Seen through a modern-day policing lens, the cautioning of DV abusers in my experience whilst in the police, was severely criticised and rarely occurred. Moreover, cautioning abusers and detaining them

for up to 8 hours in the 90s given the developments over the previous two decades, could be construed as fairly drastic and very much in line with the concept of the DV positive action policy.

In August 1995, the Home Office and the Welsh Office published an Inter-Departmental circular. This circular was directed at the agencies in contact with people who both directly and indirectly experienced DV. The need for the appropriate agencies to agree upon a definition of 'domestic violence' was highlighted. In essence, this circular pinpointed the issues around inter-agency cooperation and outlined the expectations of the government in dealing with DV. The circular stated:

The Government's approach is based on the premise that domestic violence is a serious crime which must not be tolerated. The priority must be to stop the violence occurring, and services should be provided on that basis. Effective action undoubtedly requires the commitment and involvement of local agencies, working together to provide help and support to those experiencing domestic violence, and to develop local preventative strategies. (Home Office Circular, 1995, p.9).

Examples of earlier recommendations of inter-agency cooperation can be found in the 1992 Victim Support publication of the National Agency Working Party Report, entitled *Domestic violence*, the Home Office's (1990) Circular 60, and the Women's National Commission's recommendation that was made as long ago as 1985. All of these highlight the difficulties in pinpointing the exact birth of the inter-agency approach to dealing with DV. However, it was not until the 1993 Inquiry into domestic violence that it received the Government's official stamp of approval. The birth of a formally recognised multi-agency approach was seen in various guises throughout the 1990s, where, by the end of the decade, it had been ingrained into an official legally binding multi-agency approach that is still in current use.

Fusing criminal with civil remedies: The launch of multi-agency collaboration

The initiation of the use of a multi-agency approach reflected the recognition of DV victims' needs being complex and a DV incident often not being a one-off occurrence. A single agency was not likely to be able to address adequately the

needs of a DV victim. The Plus Programme of reform released a Strategic Policy Document (ACPO, 1990, in Newburn, 2011). The essence of this document was to construct the concept of policing as a service and move away from seeing it as a force (Stephens & Becker, 1994). The focus was on the fundamental themes of 'preventionism' and 'community' governance (Gilling, 2007). In essence, this was part of a political movement that sought to have a locally informed, shared approach to the development of policies and practice with the goal to improve citizenship and accountability (Burnett & Appleton, 2004; Sullivan, Bybee, & Allen, 2002). The combining of expertise, resources and sharing of good practice also resulted in a reduction of costs across all agencies involved (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). The period from 1995 to 2005 was significant in that it saw a shift to the formally established partnership arrangements (known as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships or CDRPs) leading the way for statutory sector responsibility for DV.

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, all local authorities had to devise and implement their own Crime Reduction Plan, identifying local risks and needs, and working with local organisations to address them. Led by the Home Office Strategic Objective, DV was one of the issues that needed to be addressed in these plans. As a result of this act, 376 CDRPs were set up across the UK with DV featuring prominently on the agenda. CDRPs involved a combination of police, local authorities, health and other statutory and voluntary organisations, established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to work together to reduce crime in their areas. CDRPs commonly helped to raise awareness and provided victim support and training on DV.

The continued focus on inter-ministerial consultation on DV marked the way for the publication of *Living without fear: An integrated approach to tackling violence against women* in 1999 (Home Office and the Women's Unit of the Cabinet Office). While there was hope of this representing a comprehensive national strategy on DV (Hague & Malos, 2005), the government at this time opted to support locally driven and non-governmental sector multi-agency initiatives, as opposed to taking a leading role in combating DV (Home Office, 1999). Further guidance for local areas was published in the following year (Home Office, 2000).

The 1990s also saw the launch of the Youth and Criminal Evidence Act, 1999, which gave vulnerable and intimidated witnesses the possibility of giving

evidence in ways that could work towards reducing the potentially stressful effect of doing so in court. These measures, called “special measures”, are subject to the discretion of the court. They include things like giving evidence behind a screen, via a live video link, evidence given in private etc. Four categories to determine who was vulnerable were identified where DV was recognised by “... people suffering from fear or distress as a result of the crime (e.g., sexual offences, DV) or as a result of intimidation” (Burton, Evans, & Sanders, 2006, p.5).

The study by Burton *et al.* (2006) examined the new provisions outlined in the Youth and Criminal Evidence Act 1999, in terms of how they had been implemented by CJS agencies. It also sought to address whether there was any improvement in the identification and support of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. Interestingly, the study looked at the hierarchy of identification, (i.e. which type of victim did the police and other CJS agencies readily identify as fitting into the category of a vulnerable/intimidated victim/witness?). The results showed the identification of the victims/witnesses was achieved through the type of offence as opposed to any issues the individual victim/witness may have had. Nine categories were identified where the most recognised person deemed in need of special measures was a child victim of sexual offences and the least recognised was a child or adult victim/witness to any other offences that were not sexual or violent.

In terms of victims of DV, these were rarely identified as vulnerable/intimidated and ranked as seventh. This was thought to be partly due to crime classification with there being separate crimes that constituted DV as opposed to an actual single crime. Despite screening being available as a common law discretion before the launch of this act, it appeared that special measures were employed as a means of avoiding a retraction rather than as a means of supporting the victim in giving evidence with the benefit of these special measures (Burton *et al.*, 2006). This state of affairs seems to be a long way from where we are now in terms of recognition of DV victims’ needs in the CJS when considering concepts such as Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs). This topic is discussed in more detail later. A further major development that occurred in the 90s was the introduction of cognitive interviewing of victims and abusers in a police setting. Pertinent to this thesis, it

saw the beginning of obtaining statements with the framework that is currently used.

Introduction of the PEACE interviewing training programme

In 1992, the first national training programme for interviewing was launched by the Association of Chief Police Officers for England and Wales. The purpose of this programme was to train police officers in interviewing both witnesses and suspects (Central Planning and Training Unit, 1992). It was known as the PEACE interview model (Planning and Preparation, Engage and Explain, Account, Closure, Evaluation).

Prior to 1984, police interviews in England and Wales were constrained by Judges' Rules. These rules amounted to administrative guidance that originated in the early part of the twentieth century. Officers were allowed to conduct interviews unrecorded and then produce a written account of the interview from memory. This recollection was then presented in court.

PEACE was a significant step in attempting to end miscarriages of justice. It was aimed as a 'one size fits all' training course for officers regardless of skill, experience or the offence under investigation. The training was originally designed for officers with five to ten years' experience. However, as it was deemed hugely successful it was eventually introduced to all operational police officers in England and Wales. The training included tuition and practical sessions for interviewing witnesses, victims and suspects of crime. In the years that followed the implementation of PEACE, some forces considered the "one size fits all" model insufficient to cater for all needs. Serious crime was seen to require a higher level of interview technique, with ethics and effectiveness as major considerations if convictions were to be obtained. This resulted in 'advanced interviewing' being born.

Overall, the PEACE model had an effect on how interviewing was conducted on suspects, witnesses and victims. Recent witness interview studies, both in the UK (Clarke & Milne, 2001 Rock 2001) and further afield (Wright & Alison, 2004) however, have still found the quality of interviews with adult witnesses to be poor. An evaluation of police interviewing in the UK, conducted after the implementation of a national training programme, found a low level in the quality of witness interviews compared to the suspect interviews. In the witness interviews there was a distinct lack of rapport building with the

interviewees and moreover the interviews were police led (Clarke & Milne, 2001).

Thus, despite introducing a much improved and sophisticated model of interviewing abusers and victims since 1992, the disparity in quality between abuser and witness/victim interviewing was observed soon after the delivery of interview training. This disparity could be explained firstly by the increased importance the prosecution of abusers takes within a CJS setting compared to supporting victims and witnesses through the CJS process (e.g. justice.gov.uk, 2011). Secondly, the lack of support and rapport building noted by Clarke and Milne (2001) sets the scene for discussions around the interviewing content of DV victim interviews, which is addressed in further detail in Chapter 9.

Non-molestation and occupation orders

Women's Aid persistent pressure to change and improve legislation in relation to DV, led to the introduction of some major changes, one of which being the Family Law Act 1996 and Housing Act 1996. The Family Law Act 1996, which came into force 1st October 1997, was intended to amalgamate previous civil remedies and injunctions and non-molestation orders into one act, thereby aiming to make civil protection against DV more effective. It introduced two types of civil remedies used to tackle DV: non-molestation order and the occupation order. The non-molestation order forbade the abuser to have any contact with the applicant or their children. The victim could also apply for an occupation order that banned the respondent from the family home. The occupation order, sometimes also referred to as exclusion orders, regulated the occupation of the family/shared home. A major change from previous civil remedies was that they were reinforced with a power of arrest and the respondent could face being imprisoned if in breach of the orders.

The Family Law Act 1996 marked the first time the victim was able to pursue the civil route by means of a non-molestation or occupation order knowing that failure to comply with the ascribed conditions would result in criminal charges by means of a power of arrest being attached to them. It was also the first time a victim could take action against her abuser without it requiring her to report them to the police and pursue a criminal case against them. Although any criminal conduct such as physical assault could not be dealt with by means of the orders, it meant the victim was able to implement measures towards a safer and more peaceful existence. It would be of interest to

determine what effect this had on victims who reported the breaches to the police increasing their subsequent reporting behaviour due to the contact with the police regarding the breach: Did these orders with powers of arrest increase and improve victims' interactions with the police? To date, there is no readily available information pertaining to this issue.

In summary, some major developments took place in the 90s. These included an improved framework for conducting interviews of abusers and victims, the foundation of a positive action stance in policing DV as detailed in the 60/90 Home Office Circular, and the formal acknowledgement that to effectively address the needs of DV victims a multi-agency approach was required as seen in the establishment of the CDRPs. Overall, the 90s saw positive steps being made towards the protection of DV victims and providing them with an improved service.

2.5 2000-2010

Legislation and policing

In June 2003, *Safety and justice: The government's proposals on domestic violence* was published following wide-ranging consultation which included victims of DV demanding a more pro-active approach (Hague, & Malos, 2005). *Safety and justice* detailed the prevalence of DV in England, the impact it had on victims and costs to society. Furthermore, the government's proposed strategy was introduced for tackling DV based on three elements: prevention, protection, justice and support for victims to rebuild their lives. Additionally, it proposed legislative and non-legislative changes to the way DV should be dealt with in England and Wales and put forward some new measures which included multi-agency reviews of DV murders; criminalising breach of non-molestation (prior to this there was a power of arrest); introducing the status of vulnerable/intimidated victims and witnesses; registration of DV abusers, and specialist DV courts (Home Office, 2003).

Safety and justice, contrary to many of the other previous public sources, was the first to recognise not only female victimisation in DV but also female perpetration (George & Darwood, 2003). In December 2003, *The summary of responses to safety and justice: the government's proposals on domestic*

violence was published, accompanied a little later by the publication and introduction into Parliament of the *Domestic violence, crime and victims bill and later act* (2004). Thus, it seemed that the beginning of the noughties saw a shift in viewing DV with seriousness and as a priority that it deserved, and with the right powers to tackle it properly and effectively. DV was finally being acknowledged as an issue that belonged as a priority item in the CJS agenda.

The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004) was hailed as “... the biggest piece of legislation on domestic violence in over 30 years” (Home Office, 2005a, p.3). One of the fundamental changes was enforcing the civil breach of a non-molestation order with criminal offence implications, carrying a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment. The Act further expanded the availability of injunctions to those same sex couples or those not living together and made common assault an ‘arrestable offence’. Although the Act set out some key measures required, some of the proposals introduced in the *Safety and justice* (2003) were lacking from the Act (Hague & Malos, 2005). Not included in The Act were the criminalisation of the breach of an occupation order or the elimination of the time limits placed on these orders (Harne & Radford 2008). Furthermore, no solutions were offered in terms of legal defence for when a victim kills their abusers or the situation in general of migrant women. Although the Act did fail to satisfy expectations from all parties concerned (especially non-governmental organisations), it did promise to contribute a significant amount of funding towards national DV helplines, internet services and refuge services (Hague & Malos, 2005). However, an evaluation of the Act (Hester, Westmarland, Pearce, & Williamson, 2008) found the implementations of the provisions outlined to be somewhat limited and recommended further monitoring of the Act and its impact. This recommendation is perhaps reflective of the ongoing dilemma where increasingly more legislation is proffered as a way of trying to ameliorate the increasingly acute issue of DV, but the actual putting into practice of the legislation remains the obstacle.

The Safety and justice consultation paper further provided a major impetus to broaden the Specialist Domestic Violence Courts’ activity in the United Kingdom. The aim of the Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs)

is to combine criminal and civil settings in order to deal more effectively with DV. The SDVCs' programmes were introduced as special measures to try and ameliorate the court process for victims of DV thereby aiming to bring more abusers to justice and reduce the overall time it takes to get cases to court and the amount of time spent in court. The programme started with 23 individual SDVC systems and the central focus is to have a holistic system that supports a victim through the court process. (Home Office, 2008). SDVCs take a multi-agency approach to DV with criminal justice agencies, magistrates and specialist support services for victims working together in partnership. The central focus of SDVCs is to reduce victims' risk and provide support through the court system. An early evaluation of this initiative (Cook, Burton, Robinson, & Valley, 2004) found that SDVCs succeeded in achieving their central role in increasing the effectiveness and support offered within these courts as well as making advocacy and information-sharing easier to achieve and improving victim participation and satisfaction (although see Robinson & Cook, 2006 discussed below). By November 2010, there were 141 SDVCs nationally (Home Office, 2010) operating across England and Wales, with the government signalling its intent to develop the system (Home Office, 2011). However, in 2013, it was reported there were 138 courts in operation (<http://justiceinnovation.org>). It does not seem clear why the number of courts were reduced, other than for issues around funding.

Looking to assess victim participation for victims who had attended a SDVC with support of an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA), Taylor-Dunn (2016) found higher rates of victims attending court and participating when compared to victims attending non-SDVCs and without support of IDVAs. Of the total number of cases to reach prosecution (87) only 10 victims (11%) retracted their statement, which sits slightly lower than the national average of 14% (CPS, 2014) and much lower than during the original evaluation of SDVCs in 2004 (Cook *et al.*, 2004). Pertinent to this thesis, Robinson and Cook (2006) conducted a further study that addressed the effect SDVCs had on the rate of retraction in DV cases. The results showed that of the 216 cases analysed, half of the victims still opted to retract their case suggesting the courts were not having the desired effect in keeping victims engaged in the

CJS process. A broader overview of the results of this study is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

The 2005 Home Office publication of *Domestic violence: A national report* outlined 17 commitments to encourage public service to proactively respond to DV, mentioning measures such as SDVCs and IDVAs. The six years that followed this report saw a massive growth in the use of IDVAs whose role is defined as (Home Office, 2005b)

Serving as a victim's primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis to assess level of risk, discuss the range of suitable options and develop safety plans. They are proactive in implementing the plans, which address immediate safety, including practical steps to protect themselves and their children, as well as longer-term solutions (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse [CAADA], 2009)

The IDVA role was defined according to seven key principles: Independence (from statutory service), professionalism achieved through intensive training, a focus on safety options, crisis intervention, supporting victims assessed as high risk, working in partnership with other voluntary and statutory services, and working to measurable outcomes in terms of reducing rates of victim withdrawal (Home Office, 2005a).

In a review of the IDVA service, Robinson (2009) concluded that the independence of the IDVA was paramount to the role being carried out successfully. Furthermore, sources of funding and location of IDVAs were seen to have a direct effect on their ability to remain independent in their role. In terms of the impact of IDVAs, Robinson (2009) found that full disclosures from victims were more likely to occur when talking to an IDVA than to police. Linked to this, the risk level tended to change following the initial referral from the police and upon an IDVA communicating with a victim. (e.g., a standard risk assessment increasing to a higher risk level following a consultation with an IDVA).

In a national evaluation that looked to address the impact of IDVA's services, victim engagement with IDVA service was found to be at an impressive 60% (Howarth, Stimpson, Barran & Robinson, 2009). This figure is much higher than the engagement rate victims have with the police overall (See

Chapter 1). According to Howarth *et al.* (2009), the level of support affected the likelihood of the abuse ceasing where 57% of the abuse ceased completely for 67% of high-risk victims receiving intensive support. Without the intensive support, it dropped but only to 44%. Additionally, 88% of victims who received intensive support said that they felt safer compared with just 60% who did not.

At the same time as the introduction of IDVAs, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) were set up in 2003 (more on these below). Due to the timing of the two (IDVAs and MARACs) over the following years, IDVAs' role became intertwined in the MARAC process. This meant a shift away from IDVAs' original role to assist in reducing cases being withdrawn through means of SDVCs in order to take up a prominent role in the MARAC process. Nevertheless, IDVAs' role in the MARAC process was vital and deemed to be hugely successful and central towards maintaining victim safety (Home Office, 2006). MARACs were set up to provide a forum in which information could be shared and action decided upon to reduce future harm to high-risk victims of DV and their children. Multiple agencies (e.g., police schools, victim support agencies, health services, social services, probation, prison services) work together to offer a local, coordinated response for those at the highest risk of DV (Smartt & Kury, 2006). Once a victim has been assessed as high risk (e.g. scored as high risk on a risk assessment), a referral will be made to MARAC, a monthly meeting chaired by the police with or without the victim's consent to do so. Its purpose is to share information about high-risk victims in order to prevent further sustained attacks, to prevent the violence from escalating, develop a safety plan, put support in place and lower the risk. MARACs were piloted in Cardiff in 2003 and evaluation studies (Robinson, 2004; Robinson & Tregidga, 2005) imply that MARAC conferences contribute significantly towards the safety of victims and their children, as well as promoting and improving standards of professional practice. By 2009, 200 local areas had MARACs in place, which over 12 months (2008-2009) worked to protect over 29,000 victims of DV (Home Office, 2009a). MARACs are not protected by statute as yet, but support for this legislation to be put in place is evident (CAADA, 2010) as it is increasingly seen to be an effective model for amalgamating support services for victims and advocating for early intervention. However, MARACs have also been subjected to cuts in their funding and have seen a reduction in the number of local areas where some have had no option

other than to merge areas in order to try and continue their existence (Robbins, McLaughlin, Banks, Bellamy & Thackray, 2014).

Risk assessment in DV

In line with MARAC dealing only with high risk victims, the concept of risk assessment gained traction in assessing harm caused to victims in the policing of DV. In terms of assessing risk in DV cases, in 2009 the Association of Chief Police Officers accredited and adopted the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour-Based Violence Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Model (DASH) in order to identify and assess the potential danger caused by DV (Home Office, 2009a; Richards, Letchford & Stratton, 2008). The rationale behind adopting a risk-led system for assessing DV was deemed to be that of improving police responses.

It was not until 2014, following a major review of policing and DV by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) that risk-led policing was examined. Prior to this there had not been any evaluation on the effectiveness the DASH risk assessments were having on issues such as victim safety, the accuracy of assessing future risks of offending or re-victimisation. Following a fairly damning report by HMIC who inspected all 43 forces nationally, the following was recommended regarding risk assessments:

The [College of Policing] should urgently consider the current approach to risk assessment with others, such as practitioners in forces, academic experts and organisations supporting practitioners and victims. It should make an assessment of the sufficiency of the tools that frontline officers are given to assess risk, and of the training they receive in connection with risk assessment (HMIC, 2014: p. 22, in Robinson *et al.*, 2016).

Robinson *et al.* (2016), in collaboration with the College of Policing, conducted an evaluation to assess how risk-led policing of DV manifests itself across England and Wales. The findings of the evaluation suggested officers employed three differing types of risk assessments, which indicate ongoing issues and inconsistencies with the operational implementation of the risk assessment tool. Yet despite these inconsistencies, there was ample support for the concept of risk-led response to policing DV and the DASH could add value to this approach (Robinson *et al.*, 2016). But is the administration of the DASH risk

assessment, which features 24 questions surrounding physical and non-physical signs of risk to life and escalation of violence and re-victimisation, actually improving the policing of DV in itself? What does it mean in practice to have a risk-informed approach to DV? Other than the improvement of policing DV, what are the functions of risk assessments at the frontline of policing DV? Although this thesis will not seek answers to these questions, considerations at the beginning of the thesis were given about assessing the relationship between risk level and retraction and whether there are any differences to be found between them. It was not, however, possible to continue with this exploration. It is intended to conduct further research on risk levels and retraction following the completion of this thesis.

2.6 2010-present

In March 2011, a new action plan *Call to end violence against women and girls: Action plan* was published setting out immediate and longer-term priorities for action. There subsequently followed two further action plans in 2014 and the final version in 2016-2020. The action plans detail the responsibilities of different government departments and frame policy development within an equalities and prevention framework where the focus is also on the protection of children affected by domestic and gender-based violence. The overall focus of the past three reports has been on prevention, provision of services, partnership working and pursuing perpetrators. Since its first action plan in 2011, there have been several key developments in the governmental approach to tackling DV: the introduction of Clare's law, the offence of coercive and controlling behaviour and new protection orders for DV. The latest version of this strategy has been published taking the government's vision of tackling violence against women and girls up until 2020.

Clare's law, but also referred to as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, was successfully campaigned for, following the tragic death of Clare Wood in 2009 in the Greater Manchester area. Unbeknown to Clare, her ex-partner had three previous convictions under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. In March 2014, the scheme was set up across all 43 forces enabling partners to have the right to request information from the police to see whether their partners have any DV related convictions. Similarly, if the police feel a

partner should be aware, they can consider disclosing any previous DV related convictions to the other party providing it is lawful and considered necessary and proportionate.

Additionally, in March 2014, Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) and Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) were rolled out across all 43 police forces in England Wales. The orders are a new civil order power that enables the victim to be protected by means of the police and magistrates courts putting in place protective measures in the immediate aftermath of a DV incident. This is done when there is insufficient evidence to charge a perpetrator and provide protection to a victim via bail conditions.

What seems to be one of the most radical new forms of legislation is Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, which came into force in December 2015. This act criminalises patterns of coercive or controlling behaviour where they are perpetrated against an intimate partner or family member. The legislation recognises that DV is not confined to isolated violent events but can also comprise a pattern of behaviour taking place over a period of time that forms part of many separate incidents. If viewed as single incidents, they can seem fairly harmless, but it is the ongoing continued nature of the abuse that forms part of the offence. It is radical in that it attempts to criminalise the core part of DV and move away from policing DV in a single incident non-patterned manner. As the introduction of anti-stalking laws in the 1990s seemed a major shift away from criminalising physical DV to recognising the criminality of non-physical DV violence, so this act seems equally profound in shifting the focus. It is seen to be representative of attempts to improve legal responses to DV (Walklate, Fitz-Gibbon & McCulloch, 2018).

The difficulty in criminalising a seemingly complex and clinical-based issue is highlighted in the recent figures of the new legislation being prosecuted. Bishop (2016) reported that from December 2015 to June 2016, it had only been put into practice 62 times with eight of the 22 forces examined not having charged once.

In my own force, in the first year of the legislation, 126 crimes were dealt with under Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. Of these, 32% resulted in a criminal justice outcome. Between December 2016 to November 2017, 628 crimes were dealt with and 19% by way of criminal justice outcome.

Thus, although there is an evident increase in the number of these crimes being prosecuted and dealt with by means of CJS, it is still a relatively low number in comparison to the total number of recorded crimes with a DV marker: 2016:18723; 2017:22898 (www.gmp.police.uk, 2018).

As Walklate *et al.* (2018) ask pertinently “Is more law the answer?”. If we look at the cuts to policing, to local support services and to the cost of training police adequately to deal with such nuanced, complex legal definitions, the answer would surely point to no, more law is not the answer. As Walklate *et al.* (2018) point out: “Notably, despite attempts to improve responses, the number of women murdered every year by their intimate (current or former) partners has remained constant” (p.118).

Responses in the media mirror similar concerns about the conservative cuts to DV delivered at the same time as the increase in DV legislation are captured in the following quote:

The police and courts have plenty of resources and power; giving them more won't address the reasons they are failing. If the government truly wants to tackle domestic violence, power should be given back to survivors- by properly funding sorely-needed specialist services and refuges (Guardian, 12th May, 2018).

Looking back to where the motivation for this additional legislation seems to emanate from, the HMIC report (2014) was critical of the policing of DV overall: “Officers lacking the skills and knowledge necessary to engage confidently and competently with victims of domestic abuse.” (p. 7). If this was the case before the new legislation came into force and it was reflective of policing ‘general’ forms of DV (i.e., physical), how these new forms of legislation were supposed to improve policing responses without investing substantial amounts of time and money into areas such as training, is hard to fathom.

The recommended one-day training for policing coercive and controlling behaviour was evaluated by the College of Policing (Wire & Myhill, 2016). The training offered to first responders to DV was found to have positive effects for

some indicators of knowledge and understanding of coercive control but no effect for others. The training set out to address:

1. What is meant by the term ‘coercive control’?
2. Describe the effect of multiple controlling behaviours on victims and other vulnerable persons impacted by the perpetrator's behaviour
3. Identify why victims can find it difficult to leave an abusive partner.

(Wire & Myhill, p.9, 2016)

The training had a somewhat positive effect on officers’ knowledge of coercive control but understanding of the main points of coercive control was found to be low overall. More interactive and self-reflective learning should assist with training officers in this area (Wire & Myhill, 2016).

Furthermore, Robinson, Myhill and Wire (2018) found that practitioners’ knowledge of coercive and controlling behaviour revealed a spectrum of understanding in terms of what the new legislation meant and how this affected officers’ decision-making skills. Some officers were able to recognise it fully and incorporate it correctly in their dealing with victims. However, consistent with other research, others showed a failure to recognise coercive and controlling patterns of behaviour and that missing these signs had a detrimental effect on the subsequent management of the case. This lack of understanding lead to the exclusion of eligible cases, particularly when underestimating the incidents classified as “verbal-only domestics.”

Crucial to this thesis in terms of victims’ reporting and engagement, given the complexities, nuances, and subtleties of detecting coercive and controlling behaviour coupled with the seemingly mediocre training for police officers, is the question as to what effect does this have on victims’ willingness to report and engage with the CJS? Kuennan (2013) in Walklate *et al.* (2018) comments on the similarity this crime has on the dynamics that could be experienced by a victim giving evidence in court:

This presumption of involuntariness, when coupled with the practical challenges of measuring the impact of coercion, poses an enormous risk to victim autonomy. If a court substitutes its judgment for that of the victim's because it believes her to be coerced and presumes that when she is coerced she cannot make an autonomous decision, it usurps control over a decision the victim would like to make for herself, thereby replicating the very dynamic it seeks to prevent. Instead of the batterer compelling the victim to do something she does not want, the court does (p. 6).

This exertion of control from the abuser and the courts is widespread in DV (inter alia pro-arrest policies) but seems heightened when looking at coercive and controlling cases. It would therefore stand that a victim would be even less likely to engage in these types of cases. Given the aforementioned low levels of cases brought forward and into the CJS process coupled with this dynamic of control being passed from the abuser to the court process, the cogency of this new legislation is seriously brought into question. In an era where service provisions have suffered extensive cuts, particularly for refuges nationally, money would surely be better spent on supporting DV victims with the existing offences rather than adding more legislation and thereby layers of complexity. Pertinent to this thesis, is there something that can be changed when obtaining the initial information from a victim suffering coercive and controlling behaviour in terms of their initial statement? We return to this issue in Chapter 9 when the statement taking framework of DV statements is presented. Overall, perhaps a more joined up approach across the reoccurring incidents would help prevent the incident per incident approach that still seems to linger on in the policing of DV.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter began with an overview of DV policy in the 70s where little was in place to facilitate much police involvement in remedying DV. At the very least, the abuser would be removed from the house for a period of time. In general, DV was viewed as being a private matter that did not fit with the police's role in terms of getting involved. The 80s commenced with a little more notice being taken and developments such as arrests taking place signified a shift in the importance given to DV. It marked the beginning of the criminalisation of DV.

The 90s was a decade of heightened focus on DV as a whole. Thus, multi-agency approaches and legislation in resolving DV and supporting DV victims became evident as well as more punitive measures available for the abusers. The 60/90 Home Office circular was particularly prominent in driving forward a change in the policing of DV.

When mapping the key policy and legislation developments in DV over the period of 50 years, it is clear that across both major political parties, introducing more legislation was meant to signal more support for DV. Increased legislation enabled a message to the public that DV was a key item on their political agenda. But does more legislation signal more support, choice and control for the victim?

The central point of this thesis concerns the issue of retraction and what the motivations are for victims to retract their statement. It is posited that the positive action policy (detailed in Chapter 3) partly contributes towards reasons for retraction as does the way in which we obtain information from DV victims and training offered to support officers implementing the respective policies and understanding DV. Pertinent to this chapter, it is argued that there needs to be a shift towards not treating DV within the framework of other crimes due to the unique dynamics of the victim and abusers in DV. Yet the historic push towards ensuring DV was treated seriously was, in part, framed around treating DV like any other crime. What this chapter clearly demonstrates is that the policing of DV has since the 70s shifted from the police doing very little to the 80s where arrests were advocated, which was followed in the 90s during which the no-criming and reconciliation trends were criticized. The subsequent two decades resulted in the professionalisation of policing DV in terms of an increase in specialist procedures such as MARAC and IDVAs, criminalising the breach of non-molestation orders and increasing legislation to include the criminalisation of coercive and controlling behaviour. Furthermore, there have been some positive efforts made in the area of victim engagement with initiatives such as IDVA, MARAC and SDVCs, but these are non-police forms of support. Whilst this thesis does not dispute the benefit of ensuring DV crimes are recorded properly as was highlighted in the 90s, it questions whether the positive action policy achieves anything positive for the victim coupled with querying whether the increase in legislation has a role to play in keeping a victim engaged in the CJS once she has reported a DV crime.

As Figure 2.1 illustrates, there is a definite expansion of policies and new initiatives over the 50-year period of policing DV. But given where we are with figures around DV incidents and homicides remaining too high, what has really been achieved? Underpinning the policing of DV and improving this in terms of reducing the incidence of victim retraction, is training. Whilst there is scant evidence of training initiatives discussed during the 50 year period, it is an area deserving and requiring much more attention. Without effective training to support the introductions of new legislation, it is questionable what the effects and motivations are of political parties in continuing to introduce yet more legislation. To put it bluntly, it is suggestive of political parties using DV as a vote scoring issue.

The increased rate of DV incidents occurring over the past 50 years is reassuring in terms of it indicating an improvement in the level of confidence in victims' reporting behaviour. Although increasing legislation might not affect retraction decisions, if it increases decisions around reporting then we are surely improving on the service offered in the 80s where reporting DV incidents remained low. If an increased legislation is symbolic of society being serious about prioritising DV, which in turn has increased victims' confidence in their initial reporting of DV, then the focus needs to be specifically on retention of those victims in the CJS once the report has been made. Retention of victims in the CJS can take several directions (e.g., charging the abuser through court attendance; issuing a warning; Restorative Justice). In an era where risk is a growing concern for policing, retention tactics such as Restorative Justice (RJ) are troublesome. Returning once more to the 90s, where efforts at reconciliation were highlighted and criticised, the data in this thesis show that many victims want their abuser to remain their partner and the father of their children and often make RJ type of requests (e.g., wanting their abusers to get help with drug/alcohol issues, anger management etc).

A tailored approach to DV where victims' varying wishes can be accommodated whilst ensuring their risk levels are properly monitored and acted upon seems unobtainable in the current set up of policing DV. Reviewing the past five decades, it seems we have consistently moved towards a more uniformed and standardised approach. Yet in terms of the progress made in these 50 years, it seems there are certain aspects that might warrant reviewing (e.g., DV being recorded and investigated in the same way as any other crime,

the reconciliation approach and the push towards the positive action policy, all of which were contained within the 60/90 Home Office Circular). This thesis argues that although DV should be treated with equal levels of integrity and importance as other crimes, it should vary specifically in terms of the type of information obtained and the way in which this is obtained from the victim. The reconciliation approach was dismissed in the 90s as it was reflective of officers not taking DV incidents seriously, yet increasingly questions are being posed around the role and validity of RJ in DV (e.g. Westmarland, McGlynn & Humphreys, 2018).

Simply increasing legislation is not the answer without this including comprehensive training and resources to support front-line officers in carrying out new policies. For example, given the success of IDVAs in supporting and retaining DV victims within the CJS, is there something in their training that could be adopted by the police? Or is it that the independence of an IDVA, not advocating any particular path for the victim to take (e.g., CJS, civil etc.) that lends itself to a more successful approach to victim remaining engaged? This is an area worthy of further consideration in terms of any aspects of training for IDVAS that could be incorporated into training of police officers in DV. Training police officers correctly costs time and money neither of which is currently readily available for police forces. However, victims' disengagement from the CJS in terms of retraction does not occur without the associated costs of time spent on the case by the various members of the CJS.

Concluding this chapter on DV policy over the past five decades, we turn next to an in-depth examination of victim-decision making by firstly examining the context in which the decisions are made: the positive action policy. Secondly, we review the areas of victim and DV victim decision-making and finally, apply the theory of cognitive dissonance to highlight the complexities of DV victim decision-making.

CHAPTER 3: Making sense of DV victims' decision-making.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide an overview of victim decision-making with particular reference to domestic violence. In setting the scene for making sense of this it will review the influence that 'positive action' policies on the part of the police have had on such decision-making. In so doing it will consider the origins of this policy, its implementation in the UK and the relevance it has in making sense of DV victim decision-making. Next the chapter considers the relevant psychological factors and the contribution they make to understanding general victim decision-making and DV victim decision-making theory. Finally, the pertinence of the theory of cognitive dissonance and self-justification are discussed in terms of their relevance to DV victim decision-making.

3.2 An influential experiment: The birth of the pro-arrest policy in the US

As Chapter 2 demonstrated, the 70s and 80s saw the beginnings of a growth in awareness around domestic violence (DV) interventions. One of the most impactful guidance introduced was that contained in the 60/90 Home Office circular (1990). Echoing the findings of Sherman and Berk (1984) which had been influential in the US, this circular outlined the concept of the pro-arrest policy to UK policing of DV. Given the prominence of the pro-arrest stance in the policing of DV both in the US and the UK, it is pertinent to provide a brief overview of how and why this came about.

In 1984, the findings of the Minneapolis Police Experiment conducted by Sherman and Berk were published. In short, the study aimed to assess the effectiveness of three police responses to DV: a) mediate, b) separate or c) arrest. Colour-coded pads were handed out on a random basis to officers, with each colour representing one of the three responses being assessed. Eligible households were those in which the abuser and victim were both present upon police arrival, and where the incident had been classified as a 'misdemeanour assault.' Interviews with victims and abusers took place over a period of six months. In total, 51 officers participated, with 314 case reports being completed.

The initial results indicated arrest led to significantly lower levels of recidivism (10%), whether this was measured through official arrest data or victim reports, compared to the separation technique that had the highest (24%). The resultant recommendation to law enforcement agencies was as follows: *... to adopt arrest as the preferred policy for dealing with such cases, unless there were clearly stated reasons to do something else.* (Sherman, Schmidt & Rogan, 1992, p. 3)

The alacrity with which the results of the study were accepted and implemented was quite remarkable. Just 10 days after they had first been made publicly available, the new Police Commissioner of New York, Benjamin Ward, issued orders that required officers to make arrests, quoting the Minneapolis study as one of the main reasons for doing so. Beyond speculation, the reasons for this dramatic and swift response to policing at the time is not entirely clear. Some plausible explanations centre around the study's scientific rigour employed and that it was conducted as a field study as opposed to a survey. Finally, threats of compensation escalated the change in US police force (e.g. Thurnman V City of Torrington (1985) where the victim was successful in claiming \$1.9 million after alleging officers had collectively failed to protect her from violent attacks).

Replication studies proved problematic. The only consistent message from replication studies was an increase in violence following the arrest of unemployed suspects (Hirschel & Hutchinson, 1992). The problems with replication led Schmidt and Sherman (1993) to make amended policy recommendations focusing on issues such as removing the mandatory arrest laws and encouraging the development of alternative intervention methods at officers' discretion, including allowing the victim to decide whether to have the abuser arrested or not.

3.3 From the US to the UK

Based on the findings of the American experiment, the Home Office Circular 60/90 (1990) introduced the concept of positive action in DV. It urged officers to treat DV as seriously as any other violent crime and stressed the importance of pursuing a case even where the victim had withdrawn support. Despite this encouragement towards a more stringent approach to policing DV, it took some

time before the policies were translated into practice (Grace, 1995) nevertheless in 1993, many police forces in the UK adopted the pro-arrest stance towards DV cases together with the introduction of Domestic Violence Units (DVUs) and ‘specialist’ Domestic Violence Officers (DVOs). The overriding aim at this time was to reduce the number of cases that were discontinued by either the police or the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Despite issues with replication studies and strong criticisms of the positive action policy ensuing decades after the original study, this policy remains in place in UK policing today.

3.4 Current UK police approaches to DV

The College of Policing makes the following statement with regard to a positive action approach:

Police officers should not base a decision to arrest or not to arrest on the willingness of a victim or witness to testify or otherwise participate in judicial proceedings. Officers should focus efforts on gathering evidence in order to charge and build an evidence-led prosecution case that does not rely entirely on the victim’s statement” (www.college.police.uk, 2016).

The take-home message from such guidance is clear. The decision-making by the victim, following the commitment to report the incident to the police, is not taken into consideration. Thus, deciding to report, knowing that the case might be forced through to court without even providing a statement, will undoubtedly have some bearing on the victim’s decision-making process, particularly those with experience of this policy.

Typically, victims ‘just’ want the violence to stop, yet the current pro-arrest intervention dictates that should a call be made, an arrest will invariably be the consequence, swiftly followed by the possibility of a prosecution. HMIC (2014) reported the same reasoning behind calling the police, which victims confirmed was primarily for temporary relief from the aggression, but also to calm the abuser down and to show him how serious the abuse had become for the victim.

Hoyle and Sanders (2000) similarly reported that the majority of the victims they interviewed called the police in order to achieve some temporary respite from the aggression they were facing at that moment. Some victims did not even want their abusers to be arrested, and those who did only sought the arrest in order to achieve some physical and psychological space from their abusers. Of those who did seek arrest, some sought this outcome in order to be able to “teach him a lesson” or in the hope that the shock of being arrested would improve his behaviour and cease the abuse. Hanmer and Griffiths (2001) found that police responses in the UK deemed most successful in reducing repeat victimisation were those in which intervention occurred early on and where a mixture of support and intervention is offered, compared to arrest per se. In addition to the conflict between victims’ motivations in calling the police versus what the policy dictates, it seems the difficulties in balancing the policy’s aims and victims’ wishes continue beyond the point of arrest to the stage of evidence gathering which in turn affect decisions around prosecution.

Decisions around prosecution

Issues around initial evidence gathering were found to affect the decisions of CPS to prosecute or not (HMIC, 2014), where frequently cases were not prosecuted due to a poor investigation post-arrest. In a study in Northumbria (Hester, Hanmer, Coulson, Morahan & Razak, 2003), retraction was found to be the main reason for attrition at the prosecution stage, which points to the fact that the legislation to prosecute without a victim’s support is not being used as it was intended. Edwards (2001) suggests the reasons underlying this underuse of legislation is due to reluctance from the courts and police. However, there is some variability depending on locality. In Derby, for example, it was less likely for a case to be discontinued despite a victim withdrawing their support (Cook, Burton, Robinson & Vallely, 2004). Contributing to case discontinuations was the fact CPS were able to prosecute and find guilty a defendant based on other evidence. Further variability was found in three parts of Northumbria where only 34% of DV incidents reported to the police were deemed to have a power of arrest. Of those with the power of arrest, 75% actually led to an arrest. Variability in charges being brought post-arrest ranged from 1 in 3 to 1 in 5 (Cook *et al.*, 2004).

Unevenness and a lack of good practice in policing of DV have been highlighted as a major concern (Hamner & Griffiths, 2001). These inconsistencies are thought to be a key reason for women not reporting their abuse to the police. The study by Hamner and Griffiths (2001) further found that inconsistencies in arrests and charging responses were due partly to dilemmas on how to combine this proactive stance whilst considering the victim's wishes and exercising discretion. HMIC (2014) similarly found confusion around the understanding of positive action:

This term is confusing; it means different things to different officers and is open to wide and unhelpful individual interpretation (p.12).

HMIC (2014) expressed concern that the lack of a consistent understanding across the forces of what positive action meant, resulted in discrepancies in arrest rates. In most forces, the number of arrests made as the proportion of DV crime was between 45-90%. Providing clarity on this matter, HMIC (2014) stressed the importance of arresting the abuser on every occasion where grounds for arrest existed, and on the rare occasions no arrest is made to provide a written rationale detailing the reasons for this decision. Discrepancies in how abusers were dealt with across the various forces was seen to be due to the positive action policy in particular: training was inadequate, confusion on whether the decision to arrest should be made or not, general misunderstanding about the arrest policy, and disputed evidence about how effective the arrest policy is in policing DV. Interestingly, there were higher levels of victim satisfaction levels amongst those victims where officers had arrested the abuser compared to where no arrest had been made (HMIC, 2014).

HMIC (2014) strongly emphasised the need for a detailed understanding of positive action policy in policing DV if it is to work effectively:

If the police are to implement a positive action policy with confidence, they need to understand the impact that coercive control has on a victim. While there is a concern that the arrest of a perpetrator of domestic abuse may increase the risk to the victim, it is the responsibility of the police to take effective action to safeguard the victim and their family (including letting the victim know when the perpetrator has been released (p.77)).

Whilst the introduction of specialist DV officers had helped to address these dilemmas in some cases, there was little apparent impact on general police responses. Poor design and information recording, management and dissemination systems resulted in a poor oversight of any effective responses, whether there was any adherence to policy initiatives or whether risk was managed appropriately across individual cases (e.g., conveyance of DV history information to officers called out to incidents). (HMIC, 2014).

Effects of the positive action policy on victim decision-making

There seems to be a dualism at the heart of the pro-arrest debate: it either removes the burden off the victim in making the choice of having the abuser arrested (and by denouncing DV, it empowers the victim), or it disempowers the victim and transfers the power from the abuser to the police and criminal justice system. One way of thinking about retraction is as a way of regaining control for the victim. If retraction is conceptualised as representing dissatisfaction and/or victim disempowerment, and positive action is linked as a contributor to these feelings, one could argue that by re-thinking the current policing response to DV, could result in a reduction in retraction figures.

It would seem that many studies convey the same story from victims that neither arrest nor prosecution necessarily aids in curtailing the violence (Davis & Smith, 1995; Fagan, Friedman, Wexler & Lewis, 1984; Ford & Regoli, 1993), and neither do civil remedies such as injunctions (Berk, Berk, Loseke & Rauma, 1983), but there are reports of a positive response to Domestic Violence Protective Orders (DVPOs) (Home Office, 2013). When examining the effect of police attendance and arrests made, police attendance shows a deterrent effect on abusers committing further assaults (Felson & Paré, 2005), but the effect of a subsequent arrest is less clear. Mild reductions in revictimization were found in one study (Maxwell, Garner & Fagan, 2001), but without sufficient clarity to make comment on whether this effect was due to the arrest or just police attendance.

Considering what is meant by ‘decision-making’, ‘victim decision-making’ and ‘DV victim decision-making, requires taking into account not only victim characteristics and their emotional ramifications, but also broad-based

theories addressing how decisions are arrived at. General decision-making is discussed next.

3.5 Decision-making in general

Decision-making is a vast area of research in psychology and the wider social sciences. Certainty, uncertainty, (Baron, 2000), risk, (Levin & Hart, 2003), biases (Ellsberg, 1961), rationality (Gigerenzer & Selten, 2002), and heuristics (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973) are just some of the areas of focus for decision-making. Whilst the first part of this chapter reviewed the positive action policy in order to set the scene for the policy context in which UK victims' decisions are made and to review how the policy and police officers' decisions within the policy could affect victim decision-making, this part will now seek to explore victim decision-making separately from any influences of the positive action policy, both in general as well as with a focus on DV victim decision-making. Although a distinction is proffered between general and DV victim decision-making, there is some overlap here between these two. Much of the literature concerning victim decision-making with regard to seeking police support and/or officially reporting a crime is taken from studies addressing sexual assault, rape and DV victims (e.g., Felson & Paré, 2005; Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003; Reyns & Englebrecht, 2010). It is important to recognise, though, that for DV victims their decisions can have long-standing and even permanent repercussions for the future of their relationships

3.6 Victim decision-making in general

Generally, victim decision-making can be conceptualised in terms of formal and informal help- seeking arrangements, where formal ones include police officers, medical practitioners and social workers and informal sources such as friends and family (McCart, Smith, & Sawyer, (2010). Research shows victims' use of formal support services is fairly low (Campbell, 2008; Davies, Block, & Campbell, 2007; Kaukinen, 2002). Seeking help can be viewed as an extension of coping in terms of dealing with personal and emotional issues, thereby offering some relief from the negative effects of a traumatic life event. The

support offered by family and friends is often the gateway to victims seeking more formal types of support (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992).

A gateway analogy is also employed in a different way by Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1988) who conceptualised victims as the “gatekeepers of the criminal justice system” (p16). Subsequently, in the process of examining Black’s theory of the behaviour of law, it was the seriousness of the offence that proved to be the most reliable predictor of the victim’s decision to report a crime (Gottfredson & Hindelang, 1979). Similarly, Skogan (1976) confirmed the seriousness of an offence as a strong indicator of victims deciding to report, as well as the level of financial loss, whether a weapon had been used, and if the incident took place within the home or not.

What was not addressed in these studies were characteristics of victims and how these contribute towards understanding decisions of help seeking behaviour, whether formal or informal.

3.7 Victim characteristics

Females, ethnic minorities, and older people are the most likely to contact the police to report crime (Langton, Berzofsky, Krebs, & Smiley-McDonald, 2012; Skogan, 1984). Consistently across a number of studies, more females do so over a range of crimes (e.g., Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010; Bosick, Rennison, Gover, & Dodge, 2012; Felson, Messner & Hoskin, 1999; Kuo, Cuvelier, Sheu, & Chang, 2011; Reyns & Englebrecht, 2014; Skogan, 1976). Within female victim groups, African-American women are more likely to seek help from police officers compared to those from other ethnic groups following sexual assault and DV. The status of the abuser also plays a role in decisions to report: when the abuser is known, there is a reduction in female victims reporting compared to an unknown abuser (Gartner & Macmillan, 1995; Jensen & Karpos, 1993; Kaukinen, 2002; Resnick *et al*, 2000). With regard to formal help seeking, female victims are more likely than male victims to obtain help from the likes of mental health professionals (Kaukinen, 2004; New & Berliner, 2000).

Decision-making can also be affected by the type of community in which the victim lives. In comparing rural to more urban areas, the former is associated with decreases in reporting due to fear of the proximity of the abuser and what the rest of the smaller community might think (Logan, Evans, Stevenson, &

Jordan, 2005). According to the three-stage model devised by Greenberg and Ruback (1992), discussed below in terms of formal and informal arrangements in help seeking, the role of friends and family play in helping the victim to make the decision to report an incident or not are seen to be influential.

Other, more individual-based, psychological barriers to reporting by victims are fear of not being believed and fear their report would be made publicly available (Logan *et al.*, 2005; Wolf, Ly, Hobart, & Kernie, 2003), as well as fear of stigmatization (Wolf *et al.*, 2003). Fear, in one form or another, invokes the role of emotions in how victims arrive at a decision (a topic that is covered in detail in Chapter 8).

3.8 Emotions and decision-making

The effects emotions have on victim decision-making are not well researched, despite a multitude of studies addressing the emotional impact of victimisation (e.g., Jackson & Gouseti 2016; Norris & Kaniasty, 1994; Ditton, Farrall, Bannister, Gilchrist, & Pease, 1999). More though is known about the impact of emotional arousal upon victims' attention. Fear, however, is an emotion that has been found to have a multi-faceted role in how and why victims make the decisions they do. This is reflected in the findings of the thesis where the data reveal fear plays a central role in influencing the decision-making from reporting to retracting (discussed fully in Chapter 8). It has been suggested that fear can negate cognitive processes of evaluation, resulting in an automatic decision to report the incident to the police (Greenberg, & Beach, 2004). Other emotional barriers associated with fear include shame or embarrassment where the fear of retaliation is a frequently quoted reason as to why DV victims do not to report the abuse (Fugate, Landis, Riordan, Naureckas, & Engel, 2005; Wolf *et al.*, 2003). Not only fear but anger also is one of the most common responses to victimisation (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992). Anger has been linked to the sense of injustice and is more commonly found in property crimes; the angrier victims feel, the greater the increase in reporting such crimes.

In turning to theories relevant to decision-making, both in general and with regard to DV, these tend to be constructed as a means of explaining the psychological processes of decision-making. As argued previously in this

chapter, it is important to consider the context within which decisions are made by DV victims not only in terms of policy, the police officer and other law professionals, but also the individual psychological characteristics of these women. To this end, two prominent theories concerned with victim decision-making are now brought into view.

3.9 Three-part crime reporting model (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992)

This three-part model consists of the following: 1) cost/benefit process of reporting driven by cognitive considerations of which is the most 'costly', 2) the emotional response involved in deciding to report a crime, and 3) the social process of reporting. Surveys, official data and quasi-experimental methods were used by Greenberg & Ruback (1992) in order to examine the reaction to being victimized, across theft, burglary, assault and sexual assault victims.

Crime and situational variables have been shown to be more influential in reporting decisions than personal variables, a finding also reported for sexual assault crimes where knowing the perpetrator has the effect of reducing reporting rates (Ullman, 1996). Additionally, Campbell *et al.* (1999) reported that knowing the perpetrator could contribute towards fear of negative reactions such as victim blaming and a negative response overall, including a lack of social support for these victims.

The cognitive process involved in deciding to report a crime in this model centres around the victim weighing up whether the rewards of reporting outweigh the potential costs of doing so. Frequent reasons given by victims for deciding to report the crime relate to utilitarian motives such as regaining possession of stolen property and ensuring the incident does not occur again (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1985, 1993, 2000). (See Chapter 5 for further discussion on the economic effect of whether or not victims decide to leave their abusive relationships or not).

In applying this model to burglary and theft victims, Greenberg and Beach (2004) sought to assess how the three components interacted to predict victim decision-making. It was done by asking participants a series of questions around the value of items of possessions taken, their emotional response to the realisation they had become a victim of crime, and questions around who they

were in contact with following the incident. The results showed that in terms of cost, the value of property taken influenced the decision to report: the higher the value the more influence it had on the victim deciding to report the crime. Interestingly, in terms of the emotions of the victims, fear was the most likely to impact upon victims' decision-making, particularly when there was an awareness that it could have been worse. Finally, social processes were found to be very influential in that being told they should report the crime, resulted in a victim being 12 times more likely to report the crime.

3.10 Decision-making in criminal justice

Gottfredson & Gottfredson, (1988) suggest that decision-making processes are approached from a rational choice perspective within a CJS setting.

Accordingly, decisions are influenced by three key factors: (1) gravity of the offence, (2) the relationship between victim and abuser, and (3) the previous convictions of the abuser. These three factors are deemed to be influential and persistent for the key decision-making points in the CJS (viz., the decision of a victim to report a crime, arrest decisions, and parole decisions).

Regardless of the nature of the decision (e.g., a victim's decision to report, decisions about arrest, parole), these three factors appear to have a persistent influence (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1988). Whilst decisions around arrest have already been explored within the positive action policy and decisions around parole/bail are of importance in the wider CJS system, the victim's decision to report or not is one of the focal areas of relevance for the purpose of this thesis.

Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1988) argue that the gravity of the offence bears upon the victim's decision to report in that the more serious the offence is perceived by the victim, the greater the chance of a decision to report. If the victim knows the abuser, however, it decreases the chances of the victim deciding to report as it shifts the matter more into the realms of it being a private matter. In terms of previous convictions, if the victim is aware of previous offending, it will likely encourage her to report the abuser due to him being perceived as potentially more dangerous. Thus, for DV victims where the abuser is known, the likelihood of the victim knowing of their previous convictions is also heightened and therefore could contribute towards a decision not to report.

3.11 DV victim decision-making

Decisions that preoccupy DV victims, and which are reflected in this thesis, include whether to report, to leave, to return, to retract, and how to protect children. Examining DV victims' decision-making highlights that many of these women have a sense of agency and make decisions assertively based upon consideration of a variety of elements such as risk, the abuser's past behaviour and the availability of support mechanisms. However, it is worth bearing in mind that decision-making can be 'blinded' by a failure to evaluate accurately the risk associated with a particular problem (Davidson & Prkachin, 1997; Walter *et al.*, 1992; Weinstein, 1984).

a. *Decisions to report or not*

The decision to report a crime for a DV victim is by far one of the biggest a woman will make whilst enduring the various stages that DV typically involves. As already mentioned, it is rarely the first abusive incident that sees a victim reporting it to the police. Instead, it is usually once the victim is much further into her journey of abuse that she does so (Yearnshire, 1999). In order to understand the victim's decision to report, it is pertinent to first address what the incentives are for contacting the police.

The costs of reporting for DV victims compared to other crimes can be substantially greater (Bowles *et al.*, 2009). This is perhaps due to the intimate knowledge the victim has of the abuser's propensity towards violence, and the fact both parties are intimately known to each other and often still in a relationship. If the abuser is known to the victim, particularly if they were married, can lead to a decrease in police reports when the woman is fearful of retaliation (Felson, Messner, Hoskin, & Deane, 2002; Singer, 1988).

For a DV victim, it could be argued that her goals will differ from non-DV victims in that she may report the abuse without wanting to have her abuser charged, or even apprehended (Fleury, Sullivan, Bybee, & Davidson, 1998). For DV victims, factors that increase the chances of reporting include self-protection needs (current and future), perceiving the assaults as being serious, whether the abuser has a history of abuse, and whether the abuser is intoxicated (Felson *et*

al., 2002). Reasons for not reporting crimes to the police include the belief that police would not or could not help, it was not sufficiently important to the victim, or the matter was dealt with in other ways (Harrell & Langton, 2013). The relationship between formal and informal support networks for DV victims, reveals that informal support such as family and friends increase the likelihood of formal help-seeking through the medium of reporting the abuse to the police (Davies, Block, & Campbell, 2007).

b. Decisions to remain, return or leave

Relevant in deciding to return or remain is the claim that women can accord their relationship with the abuser with such importance that it comes to define their sense of well-being. As a consequence, it can lead them to feel that leaving is worse than occasional violence (Frisch & MacKenzie, 1991; Landenburger, 1989; Vacquez, 1996). In fact, any violence in a relationship can be interpreted as representing a sense of a failure on the part of a woman in not being able to maintain the relationship rather than a reflection of the partner's flawed behaviour (Towns & Adams, 2000).

Arguably, understanding how and why a victim did or did not manage to leave previously, what factors prevented her from doing so, and what triggers were present in her decision-making process, enable a deeper understanding of a victim living in an abusive relationship. Achieving such an insight is not always readily attained given the difficulty of accessing DV victims for the purposes of conducting research. Half of all women who leave an abusive relationship ultimately end up back with the abuser (Hilbert & Hilbert, 1984; Schutte, Malouff, & Doyle, 1988; Strube, 1988). Limited economic resources, long-term commitment including marriage, legal reasons or a long-standing relationship, can lead to an increased likelihood of victims returning to an abusive relationship (Horton & Johnson, 1993; Strube & Barbour, 1983). In both a US and a Canadian study, a lack of (public) housing was attributable to 31% of shelter users stating their intention to return to the abuser (Melbin, Sullivan, & Cain, 2003; see also Bybee & Sullivan, 2005).

Interestingly, access to £100 was found to be a good predictor of victims being able to leave (Walby & Allen, 2004). Doing so, however, has been shown to increase the risk of violence, and that most murders are committed by abusers

shortly after an attempt to finish the relationship (Pagelow, 1984; Walker & Meloy, 1998). In general, though, most people frequently fail to perceive accurately their risk or susceptibility to a particular problem (Davidson & Prkachin, 1997; Walter *et al.*, 1992; Weinstein, 1984). In short, leaving does not necessarily result in a cessation of violence and can in fact provoke some abusers to kill their partners (Dearwater *et al.*, 1998; Langford *et al.*, 1999; Stawar, 1996).

Processes such as denial, rationalization and minimization enable some victims to shift the blame from the abuser to another agent (Dutton, 1998; Ragg, Sultana, & Miller, 1999) thereby allowing them to sustain their relationship in a positive light (Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991). Entertaining such conflicting processes at the same time, however, can signify that a victim is embroiled in a state of cognitive dissonance.

3.12 Cognitive dissonance and decision-making

Festinger (1957) defined dissonance as a sensation of discomfort when a person holds two cognitions (beliefs, attitudes) that conflict with each other, or when our behaviour conflicts with our cognitive processes. Dissonance can be reduced by changing behaviour to bring it in line with the dissonant cognition, justification of the behaviour by altering one of the dissonant cognitions and finally by justifying the behaviour by adding new cognitions (a typical strategy adopted by persistent smokers as means of not taking the health threats seriously; see Fotuhi *et al.*, 2013; Gibbons, Eggleston, & Benthin, 1997).

Cognitive dissonance has a direct bearing on the concept of decision-making (Festinger, 1957). Decisions involve weighing up options in what is called the pre-decision behaviour phase. For example, a person might garner as much information as possible about two contrasting options, and in doing so consult friends/family about their views with regard to the options. Once a decision has been made, post-decision dissonance can take place in an attempt to reduce the importance of the rejected alternative while enhancing the attractiveness of the chosen alternative. Moreover, the greater the importance

and the more permanent the decision appears to be, the greater the level of dissonance experienced (Bullens, van Harreveld, Förster & van der Pligt, 2013).

An important pillar in the theoretical edifice of cognitive dissonance that has an impact on decision-making is the concept of self-justification (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). In essence, it refers to a process of providing explanations for one's feelings or actions that are inconsistent with one's beliefs, thus creating a state of cognitive dissonance that has to be resolved with recourse to some form of justification. There are two apposite forms of self-justification: external and internal justification. External justification allows for the dissonance to be ameliorated by means of searching for and finding an extraneous reason deemed sufficient for maintaining the status quo. In contrast, internal justification is a more active process of decision-making aimed at reducing dissonance in that it involves changing one's behaviour or attitude. The two forms are not mutually exclusive: if a source of external justification is insufficient or fails to remove a pervading sense of dissonance, then an individual may decide to engage in internal justification or vice versa.

3.13 Cognitive dissonance and domestic violence

Evidence of cognitive dissonance at work with DV victims is shown in the findings of this thesis (see Chapter 5 & 7). The value of giving consideration to such evidence in both the reporting and retraction statements made by victims is that it captures something of the ongoing dynamic processes they are engaged with in arriving at what for them is a justifiable decision. Cognitive dissonance also contributes towards a better understanding of the "I know he is abusive, yet I stay" dilemma many DV victims find themselves in and that many police officers struggle to comprehend properly. It is also evident in cases of self-blaming (internal justification) or treating the abuse as resulting from overindulgence in alcohol and drug abuse (external justification). It is possible, for example, a victim engages initially in internal justification for engaging in the relationship, but as it becomes more abusive to cast it in terms of external justification. Such a change in outlook may result in leaving, or even the decision to retract in order to sustain a newly acquired image a victim might

hold about her (e.g., “I know he abuses me, but I love him because he is really a good man that I now want to help in overcoming his addiction”).

In order to enhance the relevance of cognitive dissonance for the present study, it is extended with reference to two theories that derive from Festinger’s theory (viz., those addressing self-consistency and self-affirmation). In essence, they stand as modifications to the tenets of the original theory, mainly in terms of the role of self-esteem in dissonance processes.

3.14 Self-consistency and self-affirmation theory

Since the original theory of cognitive dissonance was developed by Festinger (1957), these two theories have arisen to address the study of self-esteem in the context of cognitive dissonance, and at the same time to offer a parsimonious account of dissonance effects. Self-consistency theory states that cognitive dissonance arises from the relationship between a cognition or action being perceived as either negatively or positively held beliefs about oneself (Aronson, 1968, 1999). Accordingly, dissonance is dependent on how the cognitions held about self-esteem reflect upon a person’s self-concept in the sense that high-esteem individuals experience greater dissonance, something referred to as the self-discrepancy effect. Such individuals will be strongly motivated to work hard to counteract the effects of dissonance (Stone & Cooper, 2001).

While at first glance this theory seems to dovetail well with that about self-affirmation, in reality the two theories harbour contradictory predictions. In contrast to the Aronson-inspired theory, that of self-affirmation postulates high-esteem individuals experience less dissonance than those with low self-esteem because they have a larger reserve of positive self-concepts (Steele, 1988). When confronted with a challenging choice such individuals should display a smaller and more selective range of alternatives choices compared to those with low self-esteem, something referred to as the self-affirmation effect.

In terms of DV victims, support for the self-consistency theory would predict that in cases of women with low self-esteem they will not experience the same degree of inconsistency as their high self-esteem counterparts, and thus lack the motivation to overcome their predicament. The opposite would obtain

support of the self-affirmation theory (i.e., victims with high self-esteem will strive more to overcome feelings of dissonance about their relationship with the abuser).

It is worth bearing in mind that research to date indicates that DV victims frequently report low levels of self-esteem (e.g., Clements, Sabourin, & Spiby 2004) or self-worth (Lynch, 2013) due to the abuse they suffer that, for example, targets their self-esteem levels with common insults such as “You’re useless, ugly, or fat”. It should also be borne in mind, there is evidence that women who are no longer in abusive relationships manifest much higher levels of self-esteem compared to those who still are (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994). Thus, it would be of interest to examine evidence of these two theories across two groups: women still in abusive relationships, and those who are no longer. This would allow for an examination of the effect self-esteem has on DV victim decision-making.

Both these two ‘close cousin’ theories have implications for how to address and promote decision-making by DV victims. In short, assisting a victim to obtain a more positive self-worth could reduce her dissonance about the nature of her relationship, thereby enabling her decision to report or leave the abuser. For those who remain trapped by low self-esteem and not inclined towards requesting assistance, it is probable they may struggle more to terminate the relationship.

3.15 Conclusion

In this chapter, the background to government-directed policy aimed at the policing of DV was examined in order to examine some of the policy factors relevant to DV victim decision-making. Research emanating from the US in the 1980s led authorities in the UK to adopt what has been termed a ‘positive action’ policy. Shortcomings in the policy in addressing present-day cases of DV have led to calls from bodies such as the College of Policing to re-vamp current practice with new policy investments such as the establishment of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). Both IDVAs and MARACs are aimed at improving the coordination of professional bodies that tackle the growing epidemic of DV in the UK. In addition, there have been pleas from such bodies for more evidence-based policy research as a vehicle for the provision of better

guidance strategies for police officers who have to deal with DV as a core feature of their job.

While embracing such research as a means of establishing a pathway to decisions about achieving best-practice policies is needed and commendable, it does not directly apprise decision-making at the level of individual DV victims (viz., psychological factors). This apparent lacuna in understanding how these women make decisions about issues such as whether or not to report the abuser has been the main theme in the second half of this chapter.

In summary, when reviewing DV victim decision-making, it is important to distinguish between decisions to return or remain, decisions to retract and decisions to not support a prosecution from the outset. The decision to return or remain can co-exist with that to retract. Retraction, however, can also occur for reasons that do not involve either remaining or returning to the relationship (see Chapter 7).

An important recommendation to be derived from embedding the notion of decision-making in the increasingly broader scope of cognitive dissonance theory is that police officers and other professionals dealing with DV should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with this theoretical framework (perhaps even incorporating it into their training). Combined with needed policy changes, this could facilitate improvements in understanding and investigating why, for example, some women decide to report DV while others choose to remain in an abusive relationship.

CHAPTER 4: Methodology: Researching retraction

4.1 Introduction

As outlined earlier, this thesis is concerned with furthering the understanding of DV. More specifically, it focuses on the victims' decision-making process around reporting and retracting their abusive incidents, as detailed in victim statements. The data, gathered from statements, negates the inherent difficulties that need to be considered around the recruitment of DV victims (viz., safety management, making initial contact, keeping the perpetrator unaware of their participation, etc.) as addressed by others (e.g., Sullivan & Cain, 2004).

Additionally, those victims still with their abusers may, understandably, be reluctant, or struggle to participate due to the dynamics within their relationship.

4.2 Research Questions

To date, no other studies have accessed police witness statements for the purposes of contributing to this area of DV. To this end, it is hoped that by analysing both initial and retraction statements, the following research questions can be addressed:

1. Making sense of the decision to retract: What are the emergent themes evident in an initial DV statement?
2. Are there any salient recognisable differences in the initial statements provided by those victims who continue to engage and those victims who then go on to provide a retraction statement? Of those differences identified, do they form any discernible patterns that would reveal the motivation for the subsequent retraction?
3. Is retraction purely driven by the emotions the victim has for the abuser?
4. What are the reasons victims decide to disengage from the CJS?

These questions were approached by means of analysing victim statements using a qualitative approach to the data and the analytical strategy of thematic analysis (see approach to data analysis 4.4 and thematic analysis 4.5). The perspective of critical realism underpinned the philosophical standpoint for the analysis. Finally, the stages of the data analysis, the descriptive statistics of the

data, and the ethics are detailed to provide a clear overview of methodology of the research presented in the thesis.

4.3 Critical realism (Bhaskar, 1989)

As a critical realist, I hold that two types of realism exist: ontological and epistemological. The first amounts to an inquiry into the nature of things that we can observe, whilst epistemological realism refers to whatever knowledge we have about reality that is bounded by our cultural, historical and social contexts. It is, therefore, pertinent to be explicit about the context-dependent values we have opted to study, and thereby treat such values as grounded in our ontological and epistemological accounts of persons and their social relations. It is axiomatic that any analysis drawn from the data recognizes that knowledge is context specific. Thus, in terms of the data here, it is heavily dependent on the interaction between the police officer and victim as well as their individual respective values.

I am critical in terms of the interaction between policy (e.g., pro-arrest) and the effect it has on retraction statements. In effect, in conducting the analysis, there exists a three-way interaction among different sources of knowledge: the police officer, the victim, and the researcher. The three ‘actors’ have built their knowledge and understanding of the world differently, yet their interaction with one another will inform the data set in terms of the statements and analysis of them. Having had experience of being both a police officer and a DV researcher gives me the capability to be critical of what can impact upon this triadic interaction.

4.4 Approach to data analysis

My research is best characterised as an example of applied social science that is policy driven. Thus, thematic analysis was chosen for the theoretical freedom it offered. The specific steps detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed to complete a thematic analysis on the data. According to these authors, thematic analysis offers flexibility in its approach and theoretical freedom. Thus, unlike other qualitative approaches such as conversation analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis, thematic analysis is not tied to any

theoretical or epistemological positions. Despite this ‘analytical democracy’, Braun and Clarke (2006) set out to demonstrate that it does not equate to lacking analytical rigour.

Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as “A method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p.6). Furthermore, thematic analysis is free of the detailed and technological knowledge of other approaches such as Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) or grounded theory, it is deemed more suitable for early career qualitative researchers such as myself.

Thematic analysis accounts for the world as described by those who are being studied and is more able to focus on the deconstruction of the narrative itself. Consequently, no theoretical saturation or theory building was sought as one of the outcomes of the study. Grounded theory was also not considered a viable analysis method, mainly due to not seeking to develop a theory from the data. And again, whatever version of grounded theory is ascribed to, it features an inbuilt theoretical framework (viz., ontological/epistemological assumptions), and a requirement to construct particular types of research questions such as those that concentrate on social processes or influential factors on particular phenomena.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis can situate itself around constructionism in terms of examining the ways in which discourses affect the realities of events, meanings experiences and so on. It can, however, also be contextualist in its method “... sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism.” (p.9). If a theoretical perspective is sought, then thematic analysis can be considered to be a close cousin of the likes of critical realism. Thematic analysis can be reflective of reality but can also be critical of realism by disentangling the meaning of what reality represents. Returning to the triadic interaction referred to earlier between the police officer, victim and researcher, thematic analysis in this sense enables the context of the data (viz. statements) to be critically reflected upon.

Having decided on the analytical method for the data, the identification and the six- staged process of thematic analysis was commenced. Following the step-by-step guide set out in Braun and Clarke (2006) enabled me to develop the themes that highlighted the main concepts within the data.

4.5 Thematic analysis: The procedure

Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six stages in thematic analysis:

1. Familiarisation with the data: Although I had collected the data myself, due to the sheer volume of the number of statements I did not familiarise myself with the data during the collection process as I would have done if that process had involved semi-structured interviewing, for example. Of the statements collected, most were scanned onto the GMP computer system as handwritten statements, but some were already typed out. However, to keep within the remit of the research agreement with GMP, I typed out both types of statements and anonymised them in the process. Typing out the statements also allowed me to gain some familiarity with the content of the statements, a commonly occurring and desirable phenomenon in the transcription of the data stage (Riessman, 1993).
2. Generation of initial codes: Across the three data chapters, I read through the entirety of the data collected for the purpose of answering the specific questions addressed in each one. Tuckett, (2005) emphasises coding as an important part of the analysis as it marks the beginnings of the data being organised into emerging patterns. This was my first attempt at commencing the data analysis. Thus, I began with a pilot study in order to establish what themes the data contained and how I was interpreting the data in terms of my analytical approach.
3. Searching for themes: Once I had collated the codes for each respective chapter, I could already begin to see some of the overarching themes and how they could be organised. I then began to establish whether the codes could be organised under themes.
4. Reviewing of themes: The themes I initially established for Stage 1 were insufficient in my mind in that they struck me as too police- and practically-orientated, rather than enabling a deeper understanding of victims' decision-making from a more academic perspective. With the use of mind mapping (See examples in Appendix 3) to obtain a visual overview of the data, I was able to revise the themes, reflecting what I hoped was a broader insight into victims' decision-making and pertinent issues within their DV accounts. An example of

the themes derived from the initial attempt at collating codes and the revision of these following the mind mapping process can be seen in Table 4:2.

5. Defining and naming of themes: Once I had an outline of the themes and sub-themes, I began to evaluate how many themes had emerged and how much overlap there was between themes. Overlap amongst some of the themes resulted in merging them and some of the codes were placed into a miscellaneous list, due to them not fitting into any of the themes.
6. Producing the report: Considerable care was invested in ensuring the establishment of a coherent thread of the analysis across all three data chapters. The quotes used to construct the themes and sub-themes were compared against the key issues identified and discussed in the literature review of DV (see Chapters 2 and 3).

A distinction is made between themes and codes which needs to be made explicit. In the opinion of Braun and Clarke (2006) a theme:

... captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. (p.10).

Codes, on the other hand, tend to be more specific, capturing more a single idea associated with a particular fragment of the data. They can be conceptualized as the building blocks that combine to create themes. There is no defined size a theme can be in terms of its proportion relative to the rest of the data, but it should be chosen by the researcher as being of significant value to the interpretation of the data.

We turn now to identifying the statements included for the purposes of this thesis.

4.6 Data overview

Due to the flexibility available in conducting thematic analysis, I was able to present a rich and comprehensive overview of the data. As already mentioned, victim statements provided to the police have not been analysed by means of thematic analysis previously, and therefore I felt it was important to provide a broad explorative overview rather than concentrate solely on more specific

aspects of the data. Prior to commencing the thematic analysis, I had already identified three data chapters, each of which would address different research questions and which would provide a variety of themes.

Stage 1 was meant to encapsulate a broad, foundation-setting platform to advance the existing literature of victims' decision-making, and to set the scene for the other two data chapters which addressed the issue of retraction. First, an exploration of the historical developments into the policy relating to DV needed to be explored in order to consider the subsequent questions on reporting and retracting decisions fully. In terms of the motivating question for the purpose of conducting the analysis of the initial statements in Chapter 5, it was posed as follows:

What narrative is contained within an initial statement that provides further information about the decision-making process victims go through in, for example, deciding to report or leave their abuser?

The question is conceptualised to be broad and explorative in nature. In terms of the data, as a police officer, I was very familiar with victim statements, and particularly so with both initial and retraction DV statements. I therefore knew what the statements were likely to contain from a police perspective. For example:

- A brief history of previously abusive episodes and a brief description of some of the relationship dynamics
- The points needed to prove the offences suffered
- A detailed description of the main offence for which the statement had been taken
- A brief Victim Personal Statement at the end of the statement

As mentioned previously, starting to view the statements with my researcher 'hat' on proved more difficult than I had anticipated. Partly due to professional over-exposure to DV, I could not initially see beyond the above four points of what I was used to focusing on within a statement as a police officer.

Eventually, however, with the use of mind mapping and organising the retraction and non retraction factors into themes, I was able to get more depth

into my analysis.

4.7 Data collection

In July 2013, I completed the pilot study, which consisted of analyzing 15 statements. These statements were chosen via a random selection, and prior to selecting them I did not seek to establish whether they were initial, retraction, or additional statements. Subsequently, it was shown that there were nine initial, three retraction, and three additional statements in which the victim had already provided one statement for the purpose of obtaining further information not captured in the initial statement. I carried out a thematic analysis on the data contained in the statements and found the initial and emergent themes to be: a) externalisation, b) learned hopefulness, and c) cognitive dissonance.

Following on from the pilot study, I decided upon collecting ten statements from each of the twelve divisions in GMP. This enabled a manageable data set given the time limitations of the research agreement and thesis completion. Thus, I accessed 120 statements in Stage 1. Including each of the divisions was done in order to reduce any local effects of particular areas within the GMP boundaries, which is quite vast and diverse, being the third largest police force in England. The statements were then randomly selected.

In August 2013, I commenced the analysis of initial statements for Stage 1. During the first phase of this analysis, I identified seven themes: 1) descriptive background, 2) victim's actions, 3) victim's response to abuser, 4) victim's perceptions of abuser, 5) victim's reflections 6) interactions with police, and 7) moving forward. I concluded that the analysis did not capture enough of the data. I revised the themes due to feeling that this part of the Stage 1 analysis was more reflective of me viewing the statements with my police officer 'hat' on than as a researcher. The revised themes included reporting and leaving as they are pivotal to the research questions, emotions towards the abuser and cognitive dissonance. See Table 4.2 for further information on the themes, which provide an overview of the thematic themes derived from the initial coding attempts and from a mind- mapping exercise. Mind mapping has been shown to assist students in bringing more creativity and increasing the speed at which ideas are generated and organised for the purposes of writing (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009; Al-Jarf, 2009). The mind mapping exercise was conducted in order to

address the difficulty I faced of viewing the statements more as a police officer. Presenting a visualisation of the data and organising it into mind maps assisted in gaining a deeper academic understanding of the data.

Original themes	Mind-mapped themes
Descriptive background	Cognitive dissonance
Victim's actions	Policing violence
Victim's response to abuser	Mental/physical health
Victim's perceptions of abuser	Leaving
Victim's reflections/cognitions	Emotions towards abuser
Interactions with police	Family
Moving forward	Minimising violence
	Reporting
	Miscellaneous

Table 4.2: Comparison of original and revised themes developed after mind mapping.

I initially identified 22 factors indicative of non-retraction (non-retraction factors) and a further 24 indicative of retraction (retraction factors), which are shown in Table 4.3. I applied these factors to 75 statements. Table 4.3 below illustrates the preliminary generation of codes that were designed to explore whether it was possible to identify instances of retraction.

No retraction	Retraction
1. Family involved and supportive	1R. Lying to family/friends/police to cover up abuse
1. 2. Employed	2R. Previously retracted
3. Already separated	3R. Emotionally still tied to abuser
2. 4. Logical response to violence	4R. illogical response to violence
5. Taking action to remove abuser from life (telephone, Facebook, email)	5R. Alcohol/drugs a factor for victim

6. Victim calls police	6R. Sympathy towards abuser
7. Non-molestation/restraining orders in place	7R. Police called but not by victim
8. High level of determination expressed for leaving/reporting abuser	8R. Continues to communicate with abuser post-abusive incident/feels need to remain in contact to minimise abusive incidents and still in relationship
9. High levels of fear expressed of abuser and high level of concern of victim's own safety (death threats)	9R. Previous attempts at finishing relationship (mentioned)/described as on/off relationship
10. Short duration of previous abuse in relationship (i.e., victim has reported before abuse built up to serious level)/no previous abuse)	10R. Previously abusive within relationship
11. Effective victim safety management	11R. Victim allowing breaching non-molestation/restraining orders
12. Consistency in reporting and refusing to engage with abuser	12R. Unable to stand up to abuser (gives into threats, emotional blackmail)
13. Abusive incident involved damage to property as opposed to violence towards victim	13R. Hopeful of change (learned hopefulness)
14. Attends hospital for treatment/sees doctor	14R. Mental health problems such as /depression/anxiety
15. Confronting and standing up to abuser	15R. Cognitive dissonance ("Love him but he's bad to me")
16. Reported previous incidents to police	16R. Cultural pressure
17. Consistency in remaining separated from abuser	17R. Reports incident to police but does not wish to press charges
18. Exit strategy (emergency)	18R. Mutual violence

19. Engaged with support agencies (women's aid, housing etc.)	19R. Victim vulnerable
20. Social services involved re children	20R Does not want to press charges
21. Victim attended court before re abuser	21R. Exit strategy (slow)
22. Victim provides numerous statements re abuser's continuous abusive behaviour	22 R. Fear of loneliness/ isolated
	23R. Family/friends unsupportive/absent
	24R. Previously unreported abusive incidents

Table 4.3: Outcomes of the initial generation of no retraction and retraction codes.

When I approached the data for Stage 2, I was more specific in what I intended to find out with the aid of thematic analysis. (viz., what triggers a person to retract their statement and what contrasts, if any, could be found amongst those victim statements that did not go on to retract as opposed to those that did, and what differences if any could be found amongst retraction statements). I was also more *au fait* with analysing the statements from an academic perspective having completed Stage 1.

Organising the data into themes and sub-themes rather than just a list of codes across the two groups of no retraction and retraction (as displayed in Table 4.3) enabled me to gain a deeper insight into the meaning of the data, and its applicability to the policing of DV. Table 4.4 below shows the revision of the codes and the clustering into themes across both no retraction and retraction factors.

No retraction <i>History</i>	Retraction <i>History</i>
1. Short duration of previous abuse	1. Previously retracted
2. Reported previous incidents to police	2. Previous attempts at finishing relationship/on/off relationship

3. Attended court before re abuser 4. Numerous statements provided re abuser's current abusive behaviour 5. Consistency in reporting and refusing to engage with abuser	3. Previously abusive 4. Previously unreported abusive incidents
<i>Emotions</i> 6. High level of determination in leaving/separating from abuser 7. Confronts and stands up to abuser 8. High levels of fear & concern expressed	<i>Emotions</i> 5. Still tied to abuser 6. Sympathy for abuser 7. Hopeful of change (learned hopefulness) 8. Cognitive dissonance 9. Unable to stand up to abuser 10. Lying to family/friends/police to cover up abuse
<i>Relationship dynamics</i> 9. Already separated 10. Taking action to remove abuser from her life	<i>Relationship dynamics</i> 11. Mutual violence 12. Alcohol/drugs: abuser and/or victim 13. Continues contact post abusive incident 14. Mental health: victim and/or abuser
<i>External factors</i> 11. Family involved and supportive 12. Employed 13. Attends hospital/doctors 14. Engaged with support agencies 15. Provides numerous statements detailing the abusive incident	<i>External factors</i> 17. Does not want to press charges 18. Family/friends unsupportive/absent 19. Victim lying to family/friends to cover up abuse 20. Cultural pressure

Table 4.4: Outcomes of thematic analysis of the revised codes and clustering of no retraction and retraction codes.

4.8 Data selection process

As a police officer with Greater Manchester Police, following a stringent research agreement detailed below, I was able to gain access to victim statements. In total, I analysed 240 statements across the two stages referred to in the previous section. Stage 1 included an analysis of 120 initial statements in which victims reported DV incidents to the police. Stage 2 considered 60 initial and 60 retraction statements.

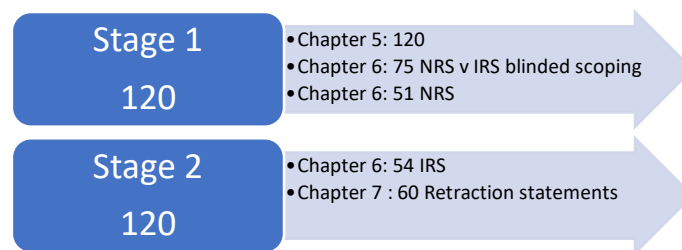


Figure 4.1 showing the number of statements collected v. the number of statements that were able to be used for purposes of analysis in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

As detailed above in Figure 4.1, for Stage 1 in Chapter 5, 120 initial statements were included for analysis. For the purposes of the comparison between NRS and IRS category as featured in Chapter 6, I conducted a random blinded scoping exercise looking at whether it was possible to identify factors that were indicative of a victim veering towards retracting her statement. Chapter 6 was based on analysing 75 initial statements. Not included were 45 statements as they amounted to multiple statements from the same victims, did not contain enough information or that it was not possible to determine via the GMP's IT system whether the victim had retracted or not. For the purposes of the analysis of Chapter 5, the exclusion criteria did not apply as the focus was purely on initial statements. Following on from the random blinded scoping exercise, I then selected 51 statements from the 75 statements that had not been retracted. Thus, in the 75 initial statement sample, 68% were in the NRS category.

For Stage 2, a further 120 statements were collected which were 60 initial statements and the subsequent retraction statements. Of the 60 IRS, 54 were included in the analysis and for Chapter 7, 60 retraction statements were analysed.

Returning to the scoping exercise which was completed in January 2014, having read each of the initial statements several times, I began to wonder which of these would end up being retracted. Without knowing which of the initial statements had resulted in being retracted, I set about identifying which

statements struck me as being indicative of ending up as retraction and which did not. I found myself being quite confident in being able to judge those that instantly spoke to me as resulting in retraction, or not.

I then asked, “What is it within the initial statement that gives me the insight to discern whether or not a retraction case ensued?” Is it due, for example, to my experience of being a police officer or are there other clearly identifiable factors present that a ‘lay’ person could also locate? Thus, for example, would the victim expressing emotions, such as sympathy towards the abuser, carry the same significance for a lay person as it would most likely be for a police officer? A police officer would most probably have experience of encountering a victim retracting on the grounds of her feelings towards the abuser. Thus, for a police officer there could exist an association between expressions of sympathy and retraction, which might not be the case for a lay person.

I was able to classify 79% of the 75 initial statements correctly that resulted in retraction or not. This outcome was achieved by reading through the statements and assigning them accordingly with no retraction and retraction factors as featured in Table 4.4. Thus, a statement could be marked as having five non-retraction factors and two retraction factors. As this example results in a majority of non-retraction factors, I classified it as being a non-retraction statement. Those that had equal number of retraction and non-retraction factors (N = 14) were not included in the data analyses.

Having established there were some readily identifiable qualitative contrasts between retraction and non-retraction initial statements, I went on to conduct the analysis as detailed in Chapter 6.

On average, each initial statement was 533 words long, whilst the retraction statement averaged 217 words. The following types of statements were not included in the analysis:

- Same-sex relationships (as with male victims and female abusers, unless for direct comparison purposes, would create too much variance in the data). The dynamics of abuse within same-sex and heterosexual relationships vary considerably (e.g., Donovan, Hester, Holmes & McCarry, 2006).
- Male victim female abuser (as discussed in the introductory chapter).

- Intra-familial (i.e., brother abusing sister) (this type of DV is not based on intimate relationships but pertains more to familial abuse).
- Prior to 2010 (as discussed in Chapter 2, policy changes rapidly over time thus restricting the time period ensured an increased consistency across the statements).
- Forced marriage: The dynamics of this particular type of DV are specific and situated in cultural contexts. Unless a direct comparison is made of DV based around the issue of a forced marriage versus 'generic DV', to include it would create too much variance in the data.
- Statements that contained insufficient information. The length of a statement can vary depending on a variety of conditions such as time available, competency of the officer, how forthcoming the victim was etc. Those selected for this thesis were deemed to contain enough information to garner sufficient insight into the victims' decision-making process in both initial and retraction statements.

The main motivation for excluding these categories was to reduce the potential variations within the data that would need separate research endeavours to provide meaningful answers. The dynamics and patterns of abuse can vary greatly from female-male offending compared to male-female offending. (e.g., Houry *et al.*, 2008). Researchers interested in, for example, familial abuse could consider using statements as a starting point from which to gain an understanding on this particular type of DV.

Having identified the type of data selected for analysis, and a brief descriptive overview, the following section will detail and consider the advantages and disadvantages of using the approach and analytical strategy detailed.

4.9 Advantages of the present approach

The advantages of analysing victims' narratives as they journey through the CJS process by means of their police victim statements (both initial and retraction) can be restricted to three main ones:

1. Notwithstanding the statements were taken for the purpose of obtaining evidence of an abusive episode, the narrative contains a sufficient depth of

information to provide a relatively untarnished account of each victim's story. It is considered to be 'untarnished' given the timing of the statement being taken, typically moments after an abusive episode has occurred. For example, in this data set, the initial statement was taken within three days of the incident occurring, and often within 24 hours of the incident occurring. As such, the victim does not suffer from the inherent problems with memory delay (Wheatcroft, Wagstaff, & Manarin, 2015) or have a chance to construct an alternative narrative, particularly as cognitive dissonance has not yet had a clear opportunity to emerge.

2. Analysing statements, in contrast to speaking to victims directly, enables a broader perspective to be obtained in terms of a larger number of cases that can be accessed.
3. Research on retraction in DV remains sparse. One of the reasons for this could be that those victims who make the decision to retract from their engagement with the CJS, will likely also retract from engaging with any researchers. This will be particularly the case for the immediate period following the retraction statement. Thus, analysing these retraction statement offers an insight that would be difficult to obtain from speaking to victims face-to-face regarding their decision to retract.

4.10 Disadvantages of the present approach

1. Statements are a product of an interaction between police officer and victim. The victim's words are rendered into phrases that are required in a statement (i.e., the legal points necessary to prove DV). A statement is obtained by following the PEACE framework (College of Policing, 2013), an overview of which is provided in Appendix 1. Conscious and unconscious biases that stem from the police officer can interfere with this process. For example, if three witnesses have mentioned the incident took place at a certain time, the officer could develop an investigative bias and coach the victim into mentioning this particular time. Additionally, some victims may not have a rich descriptive vocabulary and may rely on the officer to provide the appropriate words and/or descriptions.
2. The interaction described above may not be a positive one and as a consequence the information extracted could be biased. DV constitutes 6% of all calls and 8%

of recorded crimes for GMP. In 2017, GMP dealt with 22,483 DV crimes, which translates into 61.6 crimes per day. As such, officers can become weary and worn down by having to address its frequent occurrence. In this respect, the current policing cuts add to this dilemma leading to insufficient resources to enable the DV victim to provide a detailed statement.

3. If the woman is a repeat DV victim who has previously retracted her statement, assumptions may already be in place that she will do so once more, thereby affecting the quality of the statement taken.
4. Timing of the statements is an issue in terms of taking the statement, minutes after an abusive incident has occurred. Although there are positives, as already mentioned, the victim is most probably in emotional turmoil and her thought processes are thus likely to be adversely affected by the incident. This could, therefore, have an additional and subsequent effect on her ability to provide a coherent narrative for the purposes of the statement.

Having considered the advantages and disadvantages, the next section will address the effect of the researcher in terms of my duality of role as police officer and researcher, and the potential impact it may have on the interpretation of the data.

4.11 The researcher, the research and the researched

The duality of my position as police officer and researcher had both positive and negative aspects. It allowed me to have insights into the context within which statements are often taken (e.g., occurring minutes after an abusive episode, the emotional state of the victim, the radio constantly communicating other incidents that need attending, the need to consider the plight of any children involved, and so on). Thus, I felt that any critical points proffered in the quality of statements accessed were done so from the perspective of an experienced practitioner. Additionally, the fact I was bound by the Research Agreement (see below) meant I felt torn between being too critical of the statements I analysed yet wanting to ensure I kept within the aims and objectives of my thesis.

Brown (1996) describes the different positions from which police research can be conducted in terms of four relationships: insider-insider; outsider-insider; outsider-outsider; and insider-outsider. Insider-insider would refer to a member of the policing family conducting research from the 'inside'

(viz., a police officer/staff member conducting research on the police force for which they work). An outsider-insider would be a previously employed police member of staff or ex-police officer. (viz., a person with inside knowledge of the world of policing). The insider-outsider distinction can refer to staff or those brought in to do research on behalf of the police. The research objectivity of such employees can be called into question due to potential constraints implicitly placed upon them to produce results that are favourable to the police. That of outsider-outsider constitutes the bulk of most police researchers. Typically, academics have a considerable degree of freedom over their choice of research areas and how they choose to conduct their research. Access to police data, however, can remain problematic in the case of DV. It can be denied, in part, due to their perceived objectivity and at times critical demeanour/standpoint (e.g., Ludwig & Marshall, 2015).

Having outlined four different relationships researchers can adopt with regard to investigating police practice, it would appear my position would be somewhere in between insider-insider and outsider-insider. In terms of my positionality as a researcher, I would say that there has been fluidity in moving between these two categories. For example, at the beginning of my research, I felt much more aligned to being a police officer than an academic and was more an insider-insider. Thus, I struggled to gain insight into the meaning both initial and retraction statements had from an academic perspective. To me, they appeared to be just typical everyday DV statements, but in discussion with my supervisors, they helped me draw out the depth and relevance of the information contained within the statements from an academic perspective. However, as time passed, my policing shell diminished and my academic hat was placed on more firmly, thereby seeing me move towards the outsider-insider. This duality of being a police officer and becoming a more experienced academic has served me well in obtaining insights into the data that might otherwise be lost on a pure outsider-outsider or insider-insider researcher.

Reiner (2010) states one of the greatest challenges of conducting research within a policing organisation is an understanding of the specific police culture. Having had ten years' experience of operational policing, I am familiar with most aspects of the police culture and indeed have incorporated some anecdotal stories throughout this thesis about how this experience influences the stance some officers take in dealing with DV, particularly when faced with retraction.

4.12 Ethics, approvals and agreements

Ethical approval for accessing the data was relatively straightforward. As there were no 'live' victims, no consideration had to be given to the vulnerability of, for example, interviewing DV victims. The justification for seeking access to the data as stipulated in the ethics application and the research agreement concerned improving the service offered to victims when engaging in the reporting of their abuse. Moreover, if an improved service was offered, it could contribute towards a reduction in retraction cases thereby reducing the number of DV cases and the financial burden of retraction.

In terms of ethical approval, accessing written statements in contrast to engaging with 'live' victims, also narrows down the possibility of victims identifying malpractice by police officers they have engaged with. I did come across poorly written statements and those that did not contain sufficient information, but the potential for clashes between myself as the researcher and policing procedures were further reduced by only accessing written statements.

4.13 Research agreement with GMP

Prior to any data collection, a research agreement had to be put into place between the University of Liverpool and Greater Manchester Police (GMP). An extensive process was undertaken before a mutually agreeable contract could be drawn up. The partners of the contract were myself as the researcher, University of Liverpool, Greater Manchester Police, and Greater Manchester Police Authority. The purpose of the agreement was to enable and support my research. The following outcomes and benefits for GMP were as follows:

- Greater customer satisfaction amongst DV victims
- An improved understanding of victims' expectations of the police service
- A reduction in non-supported statements and attrition rates
- Proposing and implementing new and revised intervention strategies for DV

In terms of my research supporting policing processes, the following expectations were stipulated by GMP:

- Prevention and detection of crime
- Apprehension and prosecution of abusers
- Protection of life and property
- Maintenance of law and order

With regard to data access, all statements had to be accessed and transcribed on GMP premises and rendered anonymous prior to removing them from the premises. Ownership of the data remains with GMP at all times.

Overall, the research agreement was drawn up to ensure the data were used for the purposes only of my thesis and to ensure that by GMP allowing me access to sensitive data, I would be held to account should I not adhere to the stipulations of the research agreement. This meant that I had to be concise and confident of the data I required access to from the early stages of commencing my research.

4.14 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the methods employed in the present study as well as an explanation of the methodological process with which it was completed. In short, it involved a thematic analysis of 240 written victim statements, both initial and retraction, from a critical realist perspective. It also covered the issues of the duality in my position as a police officer and a researcher. In doing so, an outline is given of how this influenced my interaction with, and analysis of, the data. Importantly, attention was given to the advantages and disadvantages of the particular kind of data addressed in this study. It was felt that due to the type of data not having been previously accessed and analysed, together with the unique insight the data provides at often a pertinent and critical time during victim decision-making, that, on balance, the advantages outweighed any disadvantages. Chapter 5 will now detail the analysis completed on the 120 initial statements and lay the foundation for the subsequent two data analysis chapters.

CHAPTER 5: Along the right lines? An analysis of the initial police statements provided by victims of DV

5.1 Introduction

In policing terms, a statement is required from a victim following a DV incident in order to record the offences committed and detail the victim's account of what has happened, with the aim of then trying to secure a conviction against the abuser. Timewise, a statement is typically taken within 24 hours of the incident occurring and/or being reported. As mentioned in Chapter 4, recall performance can be affected by delay in obtaining the account (Flin, Boon, Knox & Bull, 2011; La Rooy, Pipe & Murray, 2005; Lipton 1977; Turtle & Yuille, 1994, in Wheatcroft, Wagstaff & Manarin, 2015). The statement captures the decision of the victim to engage with the police, thereby placing her trust in a police officer with her story. In doing so, she shares her sense of shame, guilt and confusion in going public about her private life.

The decision to report and provide a statement does not always amount to the decision to prosecute their abusers as evidenced in the high number of retracted cases (see Chapter 1). For many, the reason for requesting the police's attendance is driven by a desire to stop the abusive incident from continuing, to protect themselves from further harm, but to then continue with their relationship (e.g., Bennett, Tolman, Rogalski, & Srinivasaraghavan, 1999). In a similar vein, those victims who provide a statement may not be aware this procedure is encapsulated in the pro-arrest and pro-CJS procedure where the expectation is that they see the case through until the abuser has been dealt with by the courts. Although the statement-taking process involves asking the victims if they would be willing to attend court, particularly for first-time reporters of abuse, the full implications may not be available to the victim at the time of agreeing to attend. As will be discussed later, the victim's state of mind is not necessarily stable and capable of contemplating much beyond having gained security by requesting police attendance.

Factors influencing the decision to report have been discussed in length in Chapter 3 and focus around offence seriousness, victim/abuser relationship,

previous convictions, and victim characteristics. In addition, some of the theoretical frameworks such as cognitive dissonance that enable a deeper understanding of the complexities of victim decision-making were also considered.

This chapter concerns itself with the information contained within the initial statement which, although situated within the criminal law (viz., intentionally/recklessly inflicts unlawful force etc.), contains useful insights into the decision-making process for a DV victim. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the length and quality can vary as a result of various factors such as the length of service of the officer, time available to take the statement etc. Generally, however, a statement can contain a description of the build-up to and cause of the abuse, the post-abusive incident events, the dynamics between the abuser and victim before during and after the incident, all of which are pertinent in furthering our understanding of the nature of a DV relationship. An initial statement also elucidates the emotions of the victim towards the abuser and the relationship, how children influence decision-making, reasons for reporting and wanting to leave the relationship (where applicable). And finally, the description of the abuser is usually included in terms of their issues (e.g. drugs/alcohol/anger problems), explanations as to the causes of previous abusive incidents, and how fear manifests itself. All of these are vital pieces in obtaining a fuller picture of the complicated undercurrents of an abusive relationship and, although written by a police officer, told from a victim's perspective.

The subsequent two data chapters are focused on the issue of retraction in terms of identifying it and providing a demonstrative account of the reasons pertaining to retraction, whereas this chapter seeks to provide a foundation for exploring the main themes present within an initial DV statement. In highlighting the emergent themes of an initial DV statement, it is hoped to further our understanding of DV through the provision of a firm platform from which to explore the issue of retraction.

5.2 Research question

This chapter will seek to answer the following question:

1. Making sense of the decision to retract: What are the emergent themes evident in an initial DV statement?

5.3 Participants

Table 5.1 shows the victims' and abusers' mean and median ages. The age range provides an insight into the ranges for both victims and abusers. In terms of distributions according to age, the differences between median and mean ages clearly indicate that they do not conform to normal distributions. These differences show that both distributions for victim and abuser reveal positive skewness as the mean is higher than the median. Table 5.2 shows the relationship status of victims and abusers, which ranged from being in a relationship, separated or the relationship being on an on/off basis.

Victim mean age	33.50
Abuser mean age	34.29
Victim median age	22.52
Abuser median age	23.24
Victim age range	18-53
Abuser age range	20-57

Table 5.1: Victims' and abusers' mean and median ages (years), age ranges for both victim and abuser and their relationship status classified as being in a relationship, separated or having an on/off relationship.

In relationship	44
Separated	27
On/off	11

Table 5.2: Victims' and abusers' relationship status in terms of being in a relationship, being separated or having an on/off relationship.

5.4 Identification of themes and quotes

In total there were 5 themes and 15 sub-themes where each theme was further divided into sub-themes. The sub-theme of fear appears twice both in the reporting theme and the leaving theme. Of the 120 statements from the sample,

238 quotes were identified. The percentage of each overall theme and respective sub-theme is detailed in Table 5.2 and in the illustrative quotes.

5.5 Findings

Overall, five themes and corresponding sub-themes were identified by means of conducting thematic analysis on 120 initial statements. (Table 5.3):

Theme	Sub-theme
1. Reporting (25%)	a) The last resort: situating the reporting decision (6%)
	b) Fear (13%)
	c) Escalation of violence/abuse (6%)
2. Feelings about the abuser (13%)	Under his control (6%)
	Sympathy towards the abuser (7%)
3. Dissonance (21%)	Recognition dissonance (5%)
	Hopeful dissonance (10%)
	Externalised dissonance (6%)
4. Victim coping skills (15%)	Awareness of violence signals/behavioural patterns (6%)
	Mollification of the abuser (6%)
	Proactively coping with the abuser (3%)
5. Leaving (26%)	Previous attempts at leaving (5%)
	Fear (6%)
	Self-realisation and recognition of abuse (15%)

Table 5.3: Themes and corresponding sub-themes with percentages of occurrence in brackets, identified from 120 initial statements by means of thematic analysis.

5.6 Reporting

The last resort: situating the reporting decision

The data in this thesis refer to descriptions provided within the statements around victims' decisions to report and how this major decision was reached. As discussed already in Chapter 3, the decision to report the abuse is one of the major decisions DV victims make whilst experiencing their abuse. For the following victim, (19:1 refers to statement number and stage 1 which is the analysis of initial statements) the need for self-protection and the victim's knowledge of the abuse means it is clear, reporting is her last resort as can be gathered from this initial statement:

19:1

The harassment has now come to a point where I feel I want to either take his life or my own. The police have tried on many occasions to assist me however I have not helped myself as I have not previously attended court. I now made the decision that I will assist the police and courts in every way and that I will attend court as something needs to change.

This victim has clearly reached a point where she cannot take any more. This seems influenced by the harassment having increased and become more serious, thereby reflecting Gottfredson & Gottfredson's (1998) theory that reporting decisions are influenced by the victims' perceptions of the gravity of the offence. Having not previously supported a prosecution against her abuser, it seems that this time things have gone too far and change needs to occur. The way in which to facilitate that change is by seeking to prosecute her abuser. The last straw in terms of the point the relationship has reached, enables the victim to take action and decide to assist the police.

The following victim recollects calling the police prior to the violence taking place as she was able to recognise that an escalation was about to occur causing her to fear for her safety. Having been subjected to severe violence from

her abuser during which he threatened to kill her, as soon as he sat down, she was able to leave the room in order to call the police:

91:1

I was trapped in the corner and he punched me with both fists clenched to the face and head it was more than 5 times but I can't exactly say how many punches. One punch hit me to my left cheek and some to my head as I tried to duck from the impacts. I was begging him to stop but it happened very quickly. I tried to turn away from him for protection but he grabbed me by the hair and forced my head towards the work surface of the kitchen. He did this with force 3 to 4 times hitting my head with all his strength. I didn't lose consciousness but I fell to the floor and crawled on my hands and knees to the sofa. I was curled up in a ball and xxx knelt over me saying "I'm gonna kill you and your family I've given up everything and this is how you treat me." He then sat down and I got up and said I was going to the toilet I called the police for help and then went downstairs and saw him lying on the couch. The police eventually came and he was arrested. I think I called the police before he assaulted me too because I was scared of him and I knew things would escalate.

Fear in reporting

Fear, when deciding whether to report the abuse or not, was expressed predominantly in terms of further and/or an increase in the kind of violence that triggered victims to report the abuse or for the above victim, prevented her from reporting on previous occasions. It is important to distinguish between the decision to contact the police and the decision to report the abuse by providing a statement. Victims allude in their initial statements to having called the police before, but the fear of the abuser and what they would do next prevented them from making the official report in terms of a statement. For example:

77:1

I have only contacted the police in respect of five incidents. All of these incidents I have never followed through to court because I am in fear of him and his family and what they might do to myself.

It is clear how fear has prevented her from going beyond the initial contact with the police, to proceeding to making the official report in the form of a statement. As witnessed here, fear and the emotional response in general to the crime bears on a victims' decision to report a crime (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992) such that previous feelings of fear prevented this woman from reporting the abuser.

Fear of retaliation is a common concept amongst victims of DV (Barnish, 2004), mainly due to the fact that unlike stranger assault, the victim and abuser are in frequent contact with each other, thereby increasing the fear that the abuser will retaliate once the report has been made to the police. It is reflective of the cycle of violence and the controlling influence the abuser has on the victim, which he achieves through instilling this fear in her. Fear of retaliation was expressed by one victim as follows:

21:1

I realise that by providing this statement that xxx will be very angry with me and it concerns me as to how he will be towards me if he sees me after he's been arrested.

Concern for the abuser's behaviour in response to the action she has initiated is clear. It is easy to see how this victim would reach the decision to retract her statement in an attempt to try and protect herself against her abuser.

Fear due to the ongoing isolation woven into the relationship dynamic is not unusual and serves as an additional obstacle to reporting the abuse:

22:1

The assaults happened regularly and I reported them to the police but I always dropped the charges; I was scared of what would happen if I went ahead with them I would be on my own if I did as xxx had stopped me from seeing my family and friends.

For this victim, the feelings of loneliness could be associated with a low-self-esteem in keeping with the self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988) where the lower levels of self-esteem produce higher levels of cognitive dissonance due to a lack of positive self-concepts. Here the dissonant feelings seem to involve recognising the abuse as wrong, hence reporting it while contending with the

feeling of loneliness leading to the historic retraction to occur. Retraction in turn removes the dissonant feeling of the abuse being unacceptable. Thus, decisions around reporting or not can be governed by the fear of loneliness.

Escalation of violence/abuse

In the following extract, the escalation of the abuser's behaviour towards the victim triggers her to take action and realise she needs to seek protection from the abuser:

9:1

I previously gave a note book account where I stated I did not want to support the police with regards to xxx assaulting me but he has since breached his bail conditions not to contact me and so I have changed my mind.

For this victim, the complete disregard by the abuser of the bail conditions, in place to protect her, results in her seeking to report him to the police. Thus, the initial offence did not cause the victim to report the abuse, but the subsequent breaching of bail conditions was received as a warning signal that the abuser was not going to be stopped from being abusive towards her.

At times when there is a shift in the level and type of violence, it can also cause a victim to stop accepting it from the abuser and realise she needs to take action to stop the abuse. This victim reports the abuser for the first time due to him taking the violence to another level:

74:1

I stayed where I was and I rang the police. I've never phoned the police before about him but the fact that he could actually kick me in my head made me feel sick and I knew that I had to do something about it.

This is a victim expressing her raw emotions moments after the escalation in violence has occurred. As with her, victims often reach the final straw moment. Due to the limitations of the data, it remains unclear as to what constitutes the final straw, but what it does reveal is that there is a trigger point within a victim's journey that makes her decide enough is enough. Referring back to

Gottfredson & Gottfredson's (1998) decision-making model, clearly the gravity of the offence in terms of it increasing, escalates the reporting decision for both these victims.

Examination of the reporting behaviour of victims has highlighted the fact that the decision to report their abusers is a complicated multifaceted decision, situated across the choice of staying alive or being seriously harmed or killed by their abusers. The theme further highlights victims' fear reaching such high levels due to the gravity of the offending behaviour increasing, they are compelled to report their abusers, feeling they have no other choices available to them. Evidence of cognitive dissonance, three-part crime reporting model (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992) and the theory of CJS decision-making (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1988), clearly resonate in deciding whether to report abusers or not. The following theme examines the emotions victims express, independently of any decisions to report or retract, as a way of highlighting the complexities and multi-layered nature victims' feelings take on towards their abusers.

5.7 Feelings about the abuser

This section highlights the two main emotions victims expressed about their abusers: feeling under his control and feeling sympathy towards the abuser.

Under his control

For the following victim, the option to say 'No' is perceived to be unavailable to her. Telling the abuser 'No' results in her getting hurt and further abused:

22:1

I am so scared of him that I do not know how to tell him "no" because I feel like he will hurt me.

Not feeling able to make such a statement means that by acting according to her abuser demands, she manages the risk of violence against her.

The constant harassment, coercive controlling behaviour of repeatedly calling and communicating with this victim, results in her eventually giving into the abuser's demands, and in doing so is made to feel her actions are representative of being stupid:

43:1

After 2 months of no contact, xxx started to ring me and text me again going on about everything and I admit I did text him back. With the benefit of looking back now, I know I was really stupid and foolish to text him, but my head was all over the place because he was just so constant with the calls and texts, he would never give up. After going through all this again, I remember going to meet him. I felt I had to go as he would not leave me alone, despite me pleading with him and despite me telling him that he was making me ill.

From my time as a frontline police officer, victims often informed me that, rather than just blocking the abusers from their phones or changing their numbers, they often preferred to know the extent to which they were attempting to contact them. This seemed to give them a sense of having at least a shred of control left. For others, the perceived control their abusers have enables the abusers to continue their control, even when official measures have been in place, such as restraining orders. For example:

40:1

I totally admit that I've been silly and stupid to go and meet up with xxx despite the restraining order. I know people will think badly of me but I have had my head really messed up by xxx and I am totally scared of what he could do to me, if I didn't do what he said. He has threatened to get me sacked, make everyone hate me and get me thrown out of home if I didn't meet him. I was even stupid to believe these threats and I even went back to xxx to give him £20 and plead with him to leave me alone but he just laughed in my face.

For this victim, despite having reported the abuser to the police and having a restraining order in place, she continues to feel the control and coercion of her abuser. It is clear she is being controlled and coerced to meet him, and that this is driven by her absolute fear of what he could do to her. And despite the victim again calling herself silly and stupid for her behaviour in having contact with

him, it could also be perceived as a logical mechanism in ensuring some degree of further safety. Her continuing contact with her abuser is a way of avoiding the termination of her relationship, which can result in the triggering of an increased level of violence towards her (e.g., Brownridge, 2006).

Sympathy towards the abuser and the concept of attachment

At face value, feelings of sympathy towards the abuser seem contradictory or could be construed as somewhat illogical. How does the victim manage to accept the abuse on multiple occasions and continue with the relationship? Feelings of sympathy towards the abuser perhaps allow for a framework from which to understand the victim's continuation with the relationship despite the ongoing abuse. By focusing on the abuser's behaviour towards her and their interaction, it provides a more insightful framework from which to see the seeds of sympathy being carefully sown by the abuser. It is something that can be requested or even demanded by the abuser.

As will be shown in Chapter 6, feelings of sympathy towards the abuser can be as a result of the victim showing signs that she will retract her statement. It is important to highlight the meaning of sympathy as it does not always translate into wanting to return to the relationship or retracting from the CJS. For example, the victim below is made to feel guilty by her abuser and feels sorry for him "Because of his mum", which, given the restrictions on the data, further information on his mother is not available, nor is it particularly pertinent as to why the abuser's mother is garnering the victim's sympathy. But despite the sympathy proffered towards her abuser, the victim remained adamant and convinced it did not change the fact she does not want to return to being in a relationship with him (at least for the time being):

43:1

The same day that he was in court he rang me and made out to me that it was all my fault that he'd battered me and that I ought to think of his mum. He was really trying to make me feel guilty and it worked because I did feel guilty for putting him in court. Initially he was contacting me regularly, ringing me and texting me loads trying to make me feel sorry for him. I was trying desperately to keep the peace now I didn't want to wind him up and making him angry, I did

feel a bit sorry for him because of his mum, but I didn't want to get back with him despite that.

For others, feeling sorry for the abuser does translate into forgiving the abuser and entering back into a relationship, or never leaving it in the first instance. In this example, the victim talks of the abuser showing his violent side early on, just a month into the relationship. It could be argued that the earlier the violence occurs and the longer the relationship keeps going, the more the victim would perhaps have feelings of sympathy as a way of vindicating the regular violence experienced in the relationship from such an early stage in the relationship. For this victim, the abuser's behaviour is also such it conjures feelings of sympathy for him:

61:1

Xxx showed his violent side quite early on in the relationship. I recall he was first violent towards me and that was about a month into the relationship. I turned up at his flat and for some reason I cannot remember I wanted to leave and to stop me leaving xxx threw me onto the bed and ripped all my clothes off and then he started crying so I stayed at the flat with him.

The next extract highlights the patterns within the relationship in terms of the abuser offering an apology for his behaviour and sharing his feeling of being down. Despite, as the victim describes, the nasty behaviour towards her, the victim first feels sorry for the abuser then forgives him:

6:1

He was being really nasty to me. By then he was texting saying he was really sorry and he felt really down. I felt sorry for him. He has a way of doing this. We started talking again and I started to forgive him again like I always do.

Overall, the emotions shown towards the abuser are intertwined with being under his control and feeling sympathy towards the abuser, which then serves to control the victim further. Victims describe feeling helpless and fearful under

the duress of the control abusers imposed upon them. In order to maintain their control, abusers threaten the victim with important issues such as their job security. In doing so, they harass them to such an extent that the victims reply to their messages due to fear of what would happen if they did not. Feeling under the abuser's control mixed with feelings of sympathy seems a toxic mix where the control feeds the sympathy that in turn enables the abuser's behaviour, their apologies and culminates in returning to the abusive relationship.

5.8 The dissonance of abuse and its typology

In terms of creating long-lasting change in our behaviour, our motivation to cope with cognitive dissonance is affected by the level of punishment or reward, which in turn is related to either our internal and external mode of justification, as detailed in Chapter 3. External justification allows for the dissonance to be ameliorated by means of searching and finding a reason for maintaining the status quo. For example, when college students who were asked to lie about a boring task, the rating of the task for those who were paid a larger amount of cash for lying remained as it was, boring. Conversely, those who were paid a much smaller amount changed their view of the task and rated it much more highly, thereby confirming that without a high external justification, and in this case a reward system, internal justification results in a change of view and/or behaviour (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959).

An apposite example can be found in the following quote:

68:1

I'm really scared of him; I just don't know what he would do next. I do love him but I think it's for the best he stays away from me. You just can't hurt someone like this, when he is supposed to love me. I can't see a future with him, unless he gets help. I can't live with him anymore.

The victim here is wavering about her decision to move away from the abuser, and only will re-consider if "he gets help". In reporting the abuser, this removes

the punishment momentarily thereby removing the external justification, it could be the victim then reverts back to her more enduring feelings of love for her abuser.

In the data, three types of cognitive dissonance were identified in the data that were categorised as: recognition dissonance, hopeful dissonance and externalised dissonance.

Recognition dissonance

Describing their feelings as ‘wrong’ does not stop some of the victims from remaining with their abusers. At times, it seems to shift them towards leaving their relationships, but in others it seems to make them more hopeless without showing any signs of moving away from the relationship. It seems for some that the good times outweigh the bad times, thereby encouraging the victim to continue to view the relationship in a positive light. Consider the following extract:

8:1

I love him but at the same time I know what he does to me is wrong. When xxx wants to be nice he treats me really well and that's the side of him that I love.

Similarly, for the following victim, it is when the abuser is nice to her that she feels good within herself, and it enables her to cling on to the hope that he will not assault her again:

69:1

Whilst in the flat I didn't phone for help or call out of the window for help as I thought he was being nice to me and he wouldn't assault me again. I was also in so much pain I couldn't move. When he was being nice I felt nice and wanted.

The dissonance is evident here for both victims as they recognise the abuser's behaviour as wrong yet focus on their feelings of love towards him when he is pleasant towards them in order to reduce the state of dissonance. According to the theory of self-affirmation (Steele *et al.*, 1993), the victim focuses on the positive side of the abuser such that it improves her sense of self-worth (he

treats me really well), and to reduce the dissonance she feels about the wrongful behaviour the abuser displays towards her. Additionally, the victim's words seem to indicate traumatic bonding, with the lapses in the violence and/or abuse being sufficient for her to remain committed in her love towards her abuser.

Hopeful dissonance

Hopeful dissonance manifests itself in the data with a seemingly impossible mixture of hope that things will change, whilst recognising that things as they stand are in no way optimal. Further exploration on what motivates the hope could assist in identifying whether it is related to, for example, the amount of effort already expended in maintaining the relationship, as indicated by the numerous times the couple have separated. The more effort required, the more committed a person will feel towards that decision (Aronson & Mills, 1959), in this case getting back together. Thus, for this victim it could be that the level of effort already exerted increases her level of commitment to staying and this achieved by the feeling of hope driving the level of commitment to staying.

Consider the next two extracts:

30:1

We have split up a couple of times but we always end up getting back together. I think he will change and we will be happy but he never does.

It is also the feeling of being lonely that can sometimes overcome the feelings associated with being assaulted on a regular basis, with the undercurrent of hopefulness, that the abuser could change his behaviour. Loneliness is one of the common reasons for victims to stay within abusive relationships (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 2011) as seems to be the case with this victim:

32:1

Xxx has assaulted me throughout the relationship some of which have not been reported. He has contacted me whilst on bail which I have responded to. He is due back in court this week or next week for sentencing. I have responded as I am lonely and he says he will change.

The sense of loneliness has been linked to low levels of self-esteem (e.g., Vanhalst, Luyckx, Scholte, *et al.*, 2013). With low self-esteem, according to the

self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1993), increased dissonance will motivate a person to seek cognitions that affirm their positive sense of self-worth. It could be surmised that the relationship allows this victim to improve her sense of self-worth by reducing her feelings of loneliness, thereby improving her sense of self-esteem.

Externalised dissonance

The responsibility for abusive behaviour lies solely with the abuser, yet victims are often prone to externalising this blame to either substances such as alcohol, drugs and/or to feelings of loneliness, resulting in minimising the blame of the abuser (e.g., Ragg, Sultana & Miller, 1999). This is captured by the concept of external justification where the blame is shifted onto extraneous reasons thereby allowing the dissonance to dissipate accordingly.

The following two quotes illustrate the externalisation of blame onto alcohol consumption:

30:1

Xxx scares me so much. I know that when xxx drinks he is going to be aggressive and violent towards me. Xxx doesn't know his limits when it comes to alcohol and he will take his anger out on me when he drinks. I am scared of what he is capable of and that he will really hurt me one day. The incident I have reported stems from an argument after him drinking a lot of alcohol. I always end up having to put up with his abuse towards me.

10:1

Approx. 2 weeks ago xxx got in touch with me and told me he had stopped drinking, which I stupidly believed. So, I gave him a second chance. For the first week and a half he seemed to be doing really well. He didn't have any alcohol and I believed he had changed. Xxx is a totally different person when drunk and I can't take it anymore.

A natural solution to living with the constant dissonance of knowing what is happening in the relationship is wrong, but still loving the person who is hurting you, is to minimise the abuse and shift it to an external cause. It is common for

victims to think it is the alcohol/drugs, not the abuser, that leads to a reoccurrence of the violence. Victims commonly align with the ‘demon rum’ hypothesis for explaining the abuser’s violent episodes (Sapiente, 1988). Although studies have found that intoxicated males commit more severe and frequent violence than sober men, others have also shown that those who batter when intoxicated will do so also when sober (Bennett *et al.*, 1994).

Another common pattern in shifting the blame from the abuser to elsewhere is for the victims to blame themselves, which can then lead to them looking to change their own behaviour (Prange, 1985). Put another way: “The inability of women to condemn the aggression directed at them by a loved partner seems directly proportional to their level of involvement in the relationship.” (LaViolette & Barnett, 2014, p. 103). For example:

84:1

I do not want to see xxx because he makes me panicky as I don't know what his intentions are with me. He makes me feel worthless as a result of the things that he says to me. I am very upset that he has hit me and I feel that it is my fault as to why he hits me.

With aggression having obliterated self-confidence and self-worth, it seems this victim has no other option other than to blame herself.

For the following victim, the abuser’s persistence in being let in and lavishing her with expressions of love, results in her giving in, which then immediately leads to self-blame and self-criticism of being weak:

72:1

At 07.30 this morning I heard somebody knocking on the door I have then heard xxx shouting through the letterbox “come on babe are you letting me in, I love you.” At first I said I no but he kept telling me he loved me and was sorry. I am just a weak person so in the end I let him in.

The fact the victim describes herself as weak seems to be her way of claiming responsibility for the incident occurring. Her focus and her rationale as to why the abusive incident occurred leads to her image of herself as a weak person. (i.e., if she had been more strong-willed/resilient, things would never have got

out of hand). Yet it is clear that it is the abuser who is the weak party by continuing to harass and force his way into the victim's house by means of manipulation.

Dissonance, in whatever form it presents itself, seems to feed an abusive relationship by blaming it on something external or to the victim herself. In doing so, it sustains the victim's perpetual hope of the abuser changing his ways yet recognising the chances of him doing so as unlikely. The question remains as to how we turn this emotional state into something of benefit or use to practitioners in their dealings with DV victims. One answer could be by increasing officers' awareness of these different ways in which dissonance can manifest itself such that it enables them to achieve a better understanding of the difficulties victims face in their abusive relationships. The three different types of dissonance described here present a common conundrum of the various push/pull factors present within an abusive relationship. For practitioners to identify and empathetically understand the dissonance ingrained in DV, they need to acknowledge the following 'flags' of such discordance:

- the hope that keeps the victim supportive of the relationship and her abuser
- victims can recognise just how bad the relationship has become, but nevertheless maintain positive feelings towards the abuser
- the externalisation of any blame away from the abuser as a mechanism with which to keep positive about the relationship

Given the fluctuating meanings of the three types of dissonance identified here, how do victims cope with the ongoing, at times long-term, abuse? The following section addresses their coping skills and how victims manage their safety.

5.9 Victim coping skills

A victim's ability to manage their safety as effectively as possible can be construed as an important coping skill. For some victims it stems from the experience, built up over years, of having to learn to recognise the signs of tension, the signs that the abuser is about to turn violent. How then did the victims in the present study cope and respond to the immediate violence? This section seeks to address this question by highlighting the insights victims show

in recognising warning signals their abusers are about to turn violent. Given this knowledge around their abuser's violent behavioural signals, how do they then seek to reduce or delay the impending violence commencing? Finally, the data shows some victims coping with the abuse with a strong sense of agency and proactivity thereby side-stepping the impending abuse.

Awareness of violent signals/behavioural patterns

Being able to predict or detect when an abuser is about to turn abusive is a requisite coping skill many victims employ in an attempt to reduce the abuse. Based on the belief if they change their behaviour to fit around the abuser's patterns of abuse, it will ameliorate the situation somewhat. Recognition of the different phases of the cycle of violence, according to Walker (1979), for example, could enable a victim to predict when the next abusive incident might occur. There exists a debate, however, on whether there are discernible patterns of abuse or whether it remains unpredictable (e.g., Cavanaugh & Gelles, 2005). The pattern of the abuse, how it has manifested itself previously, and the consequences of not doing as one is told is clear in the following extract. The victim knows what is best to do to minimise the harm to herself based on previous abusive episodes:

64:1

He was sat by the back door and had locked the front door and would not let me past him. In the past xxx has told me if I was to call the police he would kill me. He had my phone as at the moment we share it. I couldn't call for help as I had no way of contacting anyone and xxx not allow me to leave. A further few minutes passed and xxx broke the silence with his verbal abuse again. I told him I did not want to be with him and that I wanted to leave. Xxx said I was not going anywhere and that I was staying with him. Xxx continued to shout at me and at the same time was crying himself. I knew he was ready to snap again so I did not want to push him any further.

For the following victim, she is able to identify her abuser's violent non-verbal communications with her at the point of him becoming violent towards her.

30:1

Xxx walked towards me very quickly and was very intimidating in his body language as he always is when he is going to be violent towards me.

“As he always is” suggests this is a learned coping skill where the victim knows what is to come next.

Mollification of abuser

There are distinct categories in the literature on the coping strategies of DV victims that mainly centre around the approach/avoidance and cognitive/behavioural strategies (Holahan & Moos, 1987; Mitchell & Hodson, 1983, 1986). Accordingly, victims can either be proactive in their approach to tackling the ongoing abuse or, for example, make an escape plan (e.g., Holahan & Moos, 1987). Conversely, some victims choose the avoidance approach whereby they refuse to believe what has happened. (e.g., Holahan & Moos, 1987). As for cognitive versus behavioural strategies (De Ridder, 1997; Holahan & Moos, 1987), there is a distinction between those observable behavioural actions taken, such as moving away from the abuser, and those cognitive strategies that manifest themselves in terms of the way the victim views the abuse by (e.g., turning towards the positive in the relationship), similar to what was discussed in the previous theme “cognitive dissonance.”

The following two extracts are indicative of the behavioural avoidance strategies in that victims are captured as actively seeking to stop or minimize the impending abuse. For example:

43:1

I basically just went along with all of this. Xxx hated all my friends and I was too embarrassed at the way he behaved towards me to see any of them.

It seems here the victim is choosing to approach the situation of her abusive relationship by acknowledging the behaviour of her abuser towards her friends. Her behavioural strategy seems to be complicit with the wishes of her abuser. Moreover, his views of her friends result in her not seeing them, thereby choosing her abuser over her friends. In the next extract, the victim and abuser

have met up 10-15 times since the court case for lunch and tea despite the abuser having been issued with a restraining order:

61:1

Although I knew meeting up with xxx and texting him was wrong I did it to keep him happy because I knew if I didn't he would turn nasty and make my life hell by turning up at my house and following me around so at least by doing it this way I have some control over things."

This sort of scenario, in my experience as a police officer, was quite a common occurrence in which the victim engaged in this type of behaviour in an attempt to hang onto the little control she had left. Thus, where some victims are proactive or reactive in their approach as referred to above, some victims are engaged in a process of biding time.

Proactively coping with the abuser

The more proactive approach to coping with the abuse manifested itself in victims engaging in a preventative self-protective approach based on their previous knowledge of identifying the triggers to the abuse commencing. Telling abusers what the victims think they want to hear seems a fairly common tactic to try and prevent or reduce the abuse from commencing or progressing. Conversely, for some victims, their proactive approach involves standing up and/or confronting the abuser in an attempt to stop him from becoming violent as revealed in the following excerpts:

23:1

He threw something at me. I can't remember what. I cowered in the corner, I grabbed hold of him and told him to stop. I just held his top and told him to stop.

In the following excerpt, this victim stands up for herself and as soon as she has, justifies doing so in contending she was "... trying to be forceful":

12:1

Xxx states "I've been trying for weeks and all I get is nastiness." I replied "Well what do you expect for me to be nice to you?" I began walking off because I was

cold, hungry and the conversation was going in circles. The abuser starts pulling the victim by the arm and shoulder. Victim states “Get your fucking hands off me.” I was trying to be forceful.

Although the abuse can follow similar patterns in a general cycle of occurrence and reoccurrence, the way in which victims learn to cope and manage the abuse can differ from victim to victim. This section has sought to highlight some of the differing ways in which victims respond to the impending or ongoing abuse. Victims learn to identify and become aware of the violent signals and behavioural patterns that precede the abusive episode and armed with this knowledge seek to delay or minimise or even stop the abuse from occurring. Efforts at attempting to manage the imminent abuse as best they can range from mollifying the abuser with victims either behaving in a manner they hope is acceptable to the abuser or by standing up and confronting their abusers. It was evident there was a lot of proactive coping skills victims had learned during their abusive relationships, which they put into practice either by saying or behaving in the ‘right’ way to minimise the abuse.

5.10 Leaving

The initial statements do not always represent the victim leaving her abusive relationship. Some 53 % of cases are deemed ‘unsuccessful’ due to either retraction, or victim non-attendance at court (Office for National Statistics, 2016). It is important to bear in mind that this expression of leaving could be a momentary instant that is superseded by a retraction statement. This theme highlights victims’ previous attempts at leaving, the role fear played in either facilitating or inhibiting a victim’s decision to leave, and finally self-recognition and awareness of how untenable the situation has become, the latter thereby triggering the decision to leave.

Previous attempts at leaving

There are many reasons for victims engaging in multiple attempts at leaving: financial, social and cultural pressure, the multi-faceted effect of children, and

fear of an escalation in the violence (Abrahams 2010; Humphreys & Thiara 2002; Stark 2007). Often the actual completion of leaving can come years after the initial decision is made to leave, where the in-between period is a complex process of risk and fear management (LaViolette & Barnett, 2014).

The narrative in the data around previous attempts of victims leaving and returning to their abuser stems from the abuser's relentless and intensive attempts at contacting the victim and subsequently harassing her into taking him back. For example:

72:1

Last time I split up from xxx I suffered with panic attacks due to stress. When we split up xxx constantly calls me on my phone. If I ignore him he begins to contact my friends and family giving them abuse. I feel I need to maintain contact with him as otherwise he will pester friends and family.

And in a similar vein:

77:1

I've not left him because I've been scared of him, I've tried to end the relationship with him numerous times but he always gets me to get back with him. Over the last year, I've tried to end our relationship between ten to twenty times. The most recent being 4 weeks ago and on this occasion, he bombarded me with text messages- 50 messages in the space of an hour, telling me that I'm the only one for him, that he can't live without me, there's only one place that he will end up. He would never accept the relationship was over and continued to bombard me with messages until I took him back. This led me back to him, leading to a further incident which I now need to report to police as I no longer can put up with his violent and emotional abuse, as I know that this will not stop unless I do something.

Both extracts capture victims who are actively engaged in the leaving process but are prevented from doing so due to the incessant contact forced upon them by the abuser. The second extract sees the victim being manipulated by the abuser trying to secure feelings of pity, worry and sympathy from the victim which are manipulated by instilling fear into the victim. For others, displaying

sentiments of regret and apology was enough to secure the victim's return to the relationship, having left for a brief period of time:

88:1

I remember the first time he hit me was around Christmas time. We had little money so he sent me to get money for us. I went but mum wouldn't give me any so when I returned without any warning he started to hit me. I fought back this time and managed to leave. I spent the night at a friend's house. The next day he apologised to me and was really sorry so I thought nothing of it and went back to him.

First-time violence is often treated by the couple as an abnormality, an incident abhorrent to them both that should never have happened. Both men and women minimise the abuse and the man nearly always apologies, followed by the woman accepting the apology. With reference to the theory of cognitive dissonance, the minimisation of abuse allows for the external justification of the violence occurring for the first time, in this way enabling the victim to return to the abuser and maintain the status quo of their relationship. Blame can be apportioned subsequently to the woman for not following the rules the man has imposed on the relationship, which she then makes a great effort in trying to follow. But as time continues, women realise that compliance does not end the violence (Cavanagh, 2003). What is also apparent in the above quote is that there is mutual financial dependency and general lack of economic resources between the couple, often capable of causing tensions that result in violence (DeMaris, Benson, Fox, Hill & Van Wyk, 2003). Economic dependence is also a known factor as to why women stay in an abusive relationship (Grisby & Hartman, 1997; Morrow, Hankivsy & Varcoe, 2004).

Fear in leaving

When it comes to decisions about leaving, fear plays a pivotal role in both triggering a victim to report and also preventing the reporting of the abuse. Women who experience violence earlier in their life develop higher levels of fear than those exposed to violence at a later point in life (Rakovec-Felser, 2014). Victims engaged in various, behind the scene behaviours and acts, described 'quiet politics' (Askins, 2011) rather than the more apparent acts that

are perhaps more expected by those not in an abusive relationship. Thus, returning to the overly simplistic standpoint many express “if he hit me I’d just leave”, these small acts of quiet politics highlight the more subtle and gradual route leaving an abusive relationship takes. They demonstrate how it enables a victim to improve security within the abusive situation they feel they are constrained to remain in. Fear can prolong the process of leaving for a great variety of reasons. In the data, it was apparent that victims experienced two different sorts of fear: an ‘inhibitive fear’ that left them too scared to report due to amount of fear instilled in them, and ‘facilitative fear’ in which fear reached such levels that victims sought to report the abuse to enable increased safety and protection from the abuser.

In the following extract, the victim describes her agony at having just been assaulted by her abuser to such an extent she struggled to walk due to sore ribs where he had kicked her, but how her inhibitive fear had prevented her from leaving previously:

69:1

When we got upstairs he could see I was in agony and poured me a drink. It was around 7-8pm I think. I thought I had better drink it and not annoy him. I was afraid he may kill me. I wanted to say I didn’t want the drink but I knew this would inflame the situation. I was sat thinking about leaving with the dog when he was asleep, but I have had this in the past and he has woken up and I have been afraid to leave in case he kicks off.

Another victim expresses how she experienced initially inhibitive fear that prevented her from leaving her abuser, but due to escalation and fear for herself and her children, the fear turned into facilitative fear and actually facilitates the leaving process,

29:1

I’ve had enough of him and feel that I am putting myself and family at serious risk of harm. I feel if I do not do something about this relationship he may end up doing something to me which is unbearable to think of. I am scared of xxx and have been for a while. I have just been too scared to leave him or contact

the police, scared he was to get me again after an incident. I cannot go on like this anymore, it is not fair to me but more importantly my children. They do not need to see this violence from xxx anymore. I just want a nice safe environment for my family.

Self-realisation and recognition of abuse triggering the leaving process

Some victims reach the point of realising how bad their abusive relationship has been. However, for those victims who, for example, have not been raised in a violent family environment, it can be difficult for them to recognise the abuse due to their lack of reference (e.g., Sedlak, 1988). Thus, they may initially spend time trying to change the fact the abuse is occurring in their relationship by altering their behaviour or attempting to get the abuser to do so (McLeer, 1989). This could also be viewed through the cognitive dissonance lens: altering behaviour, changing views on the state of the relationship, acquiescing to the abuser's demands, lowering of self-esteem resulting in the creation of an increased or decreased state of dissonance.

In addition to the struggles of eventually reaching that moment of realisation, Cavanagh (2003) identifies various stages and types of strategies of resistance. Firstly, there is the denial strategy by both parties, referred to as an aberration. Apologies are offered and quickly accepted. Secondly, comes the attempts at talking to their abusers about their violent behaviour and raising awareness, but it does not succeed. Thirdly, various other strategies start being employed to try and create a de-escalation in the violence occurring. Thus, women start to agree with everything, telling the abuser how much they love him and abide by his rules. Gradually, their self-esteem starts to dissipate as their sense of fear increases. Finally, having tried all of the above, the violence has reached a life-threatening stage, women feel angrier and become more confrontational and less protective of this shared secret they have been trying to hide from others. Women tell others of the ongoing abuse and some even reach the stage of disclosing the abuse to the police.

The following victim, having reported this current incident partly captured below, is able to reflect on her relationship as a whole and see how bad it has been for her. She seems to realise that the only way of getting the abuse to stop and to make herself safe again is to leave the relationship:

102:1

This incident has made me realise that enough is enough. I am concerned that xxx behaviour is getting worse and I feel like I am being mentally as well as physically abused.

Returning to the abuser and apologising, the next victim has on previous occasions taken him back due to feeling sorry for him but has now reached the point where she realises that the state of the relationship has become unbearable. The trigger for seeing things for what they are in her relationship can be brought about by an escalation in violence as exemplified in her statement:

72:1

This has left me feeling very nervous and on edge. I am very scared in case xxx comes back and manages to get into my flat again. I have always taken him back in the past but this is the final straw. I honestly believe that if I do not do something about him now then he will end up killing me.

The victim here has arrived at a choice between her relationship and her own life. If she chooses to remain in her relationship, she has realised that it could result in him not just abusing her but also killing her given the increased level of violence she is subjected to.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a variety of narratives derived from initial statements. A foundation for understanding the decision-making processes victims engage in is offered while taking account of the existing literature. In essence, it has addressed the issue of what triggers a victim to decide to report the abuse. For some, it was considered to be the last resort, for some it was driven out of fear, and for others it eventuated from the violence that had escalated noticeably to another level, thus motivating them to decide to report the latest abusive incident. In terms of emotions towards the abuser, they were expressed as one of being under his control or of feeling sympathy towards him.

Whilst continuing their journey through the abuse, and with particular

emphasis on the latest abusive incident, the prevalence of dissonance could be readily identified across the statements. It manifested itself in recognising the abuse was creating a state of dissonance (recognition dissonance); hopeful dissonance where victims described their hopes ceased to exist due to the ongoing abuse or conversely where hope kept the relationship going, and externalised dissonance in which the blame was shifted from the abuser to external factors (viz., alcohol, mental health etc.). Cognitive dissonance creates a foundation from which to understand the complexities of many of the pivotal decision-making points in a DV victim's journey.

In terms of victims' coping skills, they manifested themselves in the awareness of the violent signals and repetitive behavioural patterns abusers display throughout the relationship. Certain victims engaged in attempting to placate the abuser by being told what to do and acting accordingly. Conversely, some victims engaged in proactive ways of dealing with their abusers by either standing up to them or by taking action to try and reduce or prevent the abuse. And finally, narratives around leaving highlighted victims' previous attempts at leaving and what stopped them either from doing so or returning to the relationship, how they set up their exit strategy from the abuse, and their moments of self-realisation and reflections on the development of the abuse, which had escalated to the point of enforcing the decision to leave their abusers at the moment of the statement being taken.

Having provided a basis for understanding the narratives contained in the initial statements, in terms of the decision-making and complexities victims reveal during this stage, the following chapter looks to address more specifically the issue of retraction. Chapter 6 seeks to establish whether there are any differences between those victims who provide a statement and do not retract (NRS) and those victims who provide a statement but then go on to retract their statement (IRS).

CHAPTER 6: All aboard the prosecuting train: What factors might be indicative of retraction?

6.1 Introduction

Ultimately, the role of a police officer is to investigate and detect crimes and enable the CPS to prosecute with all the relevant facts available. Seeing the abuser suitably admonished gives satisfaction to the police that they have achieved their goal to prosecute the abusers (Waddington, 1999). A retraction statement can give rise to a disjuncture in this trajectory, despite the pro-arrest policy advocating for victimless prosecutions in this instance. This, however, rarely happens (Ellison, 2002). Gauthier (2010) found criminal justice professionals becoming discouraged, frustrated, and demotivated by victims withdrawing their support.

From my own policing experience, I was quickly made aware of the pressurised performance indicator culture that police officers are subjected to. Targets were important, even in the policing of DV. As such, any indication of a victim retracting was often interpreted as under-performing by the officer and even failing. I remember receiving phone calls from victims whose cases I had been working on for a few months and listening to them explaining why they wanted to retract their statement, whilst at the same time looking at the substantial case file I had built up to prosecute her abuser. In the pressurised environment of policing, sufficient time to work on a case file is never guaranteed due to the unpredictable nature of the work involved. As a result, such moments are difficult to endure without feeling a sense of disappointment and frustration, coupled with a concern for the victim and her safety. As discussed in Chapter 7, victims facing the cross-road of retraction bring with them their own mixture of emotions also fuelled at times with a sense of frustration. Thus, endeavouring to find out whether there are signs of retraction in a victim's initial statement would alert officers that this could become a reality and if nothing else prepare them for this eventuality.

6.2 Research questions

This chapter addresses two main questions:

1. Are there any salient recognisable differences in the initial statements provided by those victims who continue to engage and those victims who then go on to provide a retraction statement?
2. Of those differences identified, do they form any discernible patterns that would reveal the motivation for the subsequent retraction?

6.3 Retraction literature

There are surprisingly few studies that have sought to identify the motivations around retraction in DV. There are, however, markedly more studies that examine why victims oppose a prosecution from the inception of the police being called. Some of the reasons why a victim does not support a prosecution from the outset include: fear of the perpetrator, being dependent on the perpetrator, whether emotionally or financially, and dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system (e.g., Hare, 2006). Other reasons include mental health and psychological reasons (Hare, 2010), continued emotional attachment to the perpetrator, (Hare, 2010), and requiring only the immediate response of the police to stop the violence (Hoyle & Sanders, 2000).

Having children with their abuser constitutes yet another reason for victims not supporting a prosecution (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010). Hester (2006) argues it is often common for a victim to conduct a cost-benefit exercise where the cost of supporting a prosecution and potentially thereafter receiving a higher level of violence towards them outweigh not taking any action against their abuser. This cost benefit calculation also forms part of Greenberg & Ruback's three-part crime reporting model (1992). Whilst these studies provide invaluable insight into the reasons why a victim may not, from the outset, wish to support a prosecution, they do not shed light on the moment in which the decision is made to retract a statement, having initially provided one. Nor do they indicate whether there are any signs contained within the initial statement, that the victim is going to proceed towards retraction.

While sparse, those studies that have looked at retraction tend to do so within the realm of decision-making on a prosecutorial level (Cretney & Davis, 1997; Davis, Smith & Nickles, 1997; Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001; Hirschel &

Hutchison, 2003; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Schmidt & Steury, 1989). The scarcity of research is somewhat surprising and puzzling when considering the central role a victim plays in cases of DV, often being the only source of evidence as to what has occurred.

Bennett, Goodman and Dutton (1999) in their qualitative study identified four reasons why victims retracted:

- 1) *Confusion* regarding the criminal justice system. This theme touched upon the fact the initial contact being made within 24 hours of the abusive incident occurring, the lack of resources to facilitate regular follow-up contact, resulting in a lack of information about the CJS process, and how when combined, the most important information was often provided at a time the victim could not properly process the information correctly.
- 2) *Frustration* felt by DV victims when they were relying on the CJS to provide them and their children with safety, with the heightened frustration being mainly levelled at the slow speed with which the CJS dealt with their cases.
- 3) *Fear* amongst victims in terms of how to keep themselves and their children safe while the case is progressing. Such fear is not unfounded as one study showed increased levels of abuse following the victim reporting their abusers. In this study, 76% of women had suffered post-separation abuse (Humphreys & Thiara, 2002). Furthermore, women are at greatest risk of homicide at the point of separation. (Lees, 2000). Fear has also been coupled with the fear of process in terms of attending court, giving evidence and facing their abusers. (Van Wormer, 2007). Fear is discussed in further detail in Chapter 9.
- 4) *Disagreement* with imprisoning the abusers when many have children in common with the abuser and/or believe in an alternative non-custodial form of treatment for their abusers.

A limitation of the study by Bennett *et al.* (1999) was that 90% of the sample (N = 83) were African American women. Consequently, it is likely there will be cultural factors influencing the results found, which need to be taken into consideration when applied to a sample from a different background. As referred to in Chapter 3, the effect of the pro-arrest policy on African American victims resulted in a 98% increase on their mortality risk due to mental health related stress resulting in their early deaths (Sherman & Harris, 2015).

In terms of obtaining the evidence within 24 hours of the incident occurring and it relating to reasons for retracting, studies regarding best

evidence for CJS purposes state that such a delay seriously affects accuracy in memory recall (e.g., Wheatcroft et al., 2015). Thus, whilst the speed in which evidence is obtained affects accuracy in information recalled, it would seem that making the decision whether to engage with CJS in the proceeding 24 hours may not be. This is evidenced further on in this chapter.

Further studies in retraction demonstrated victims utilising the police to manage the violence against them, but having satisfied this goal, the retraction followed (Ford, 1991). Conversely for some victims their rationale for retraction was borne out of a wish to have their abusers provided with some treatment to assist with the problematic behaviour responsible for the violence (Cretney & Davis, 1997). More recently, evidence obtained in Wolverhampton, UK, reveals victims' retraction motivations included the following: fear of the abuser and/or repercussions from the abuser's family, the victim's family, the community; fear of harming the status and honour of the family; fear of losing children; confusion and lack of information about the criminal and civil processes and thereby fear too; lack of information and delays to progress of their case; changes made to bail conditions; and immigration status (Anderson, Boyle, Cook, Hartley, & Roberts, 2001).

Explanations of victims' non-cooperation with the CJS have been constructed around theorising about the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979). Accordingly, victims are prone to fearing retaliation and are accustomed to living in situations where they lack formal and informal support, thereby enabling them to tolerate violence from their partner (Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh, & Winstok, 2000; Walker, 1979). They can thus be expected to avoid reporting violent behaviour and to refuse collaborating with the criminal justice system. Similarly, the relationship between the abuser and victim impact upon victim reporting decisions the in the first place (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1988).

This chapter explores what differences there are within initial statements (NRS and IRS) and what these can inform us about the underlying motivations for why some victims retract. As will be seen, retraction occurs for many different types of victims and is done for a host of different reasons, with often more similarities and overlap between the NRS and IRS category than differences. To begin with, we ask what the retraction statement represents for the victim.

6.4 Retraction specific studies

One ground-breaking study that proffered considerable insight into the issue of retraction is by Robinson and Cook (2006) who examined victim and offence characteristics indicative of retraction, taken from data of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts. They found an increased likelihood of retraction when both parties were still in a relationship, when previous abuse had occurred, when an assault had occurred, when the victim became injured as a result of the assault, and when the abuser was intoxicated through alcohol during the offence. Factors not predictive of retraction included having children together, and when the victim was defined as a vulnerable witness.

Interestingly, if victims made a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) at the end of a statement this was associated with a reduction in the retraction rate. A VPS is a written or video recorded statement which provides victims with the opportunity to tell the CJS how the crime has affected their lives. Although the VPS should not contain an account of the crime it is still an ‘evidential’ statement made under section 9 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967. As such it is a legal document that is shared with the defence if the case goes to court and the victim can be cross-examined on the content of the VPS. The vast majority of victims in this study, however, made a VPS and no difference was seen in the retraction rate. This difference could be explained as arising from a procedural matter given the time difference between the study by Robinson and Cook (2006) and the outcomes contained in this thesis. Nationally, the VPS was introduced in 2001. In GMP, a VPS is included at the conclusion of most statements and has been in place since I started taking victim statements in 2006.

There are other potentially relevant factors in retraction motivations. Sleath and Smith (2016) hypothesised that victim characteristics such as increased age (i.e. the older a victim the more likely they would retract) and being in a current relationship with the abuser, would increase the likelihood of a formal retraction and disengagement. This study differentiated between those cases where a formal retraction statement had been obtained and where a victim had disengaged without providing such a statement, despite numerous attempts by police to maintain contact with the victim. They further hypothesised on the likelihood of retraction including factors such as whether a weapon had been

used, if an injury had been sustained by the victim, the involvement of alcohol, and children being present during the offence. And finally, in terms of the abuser's characteristics, their age would predict an increased likelihood of disengagement or formal retraction.

Sleath and Smith's (2016) results showed that neither victim nor abuser's characteristics presented any differences between those cases where the victim retracted/disengaged and where the victim remained engaged/on board. What this study did find, however, was that those who did retract compared to those who did not, were more likely to be from more deprived areas and to have higher DASH risk levels. This outcome is taken as evidence supporting offence characteristics such as a weapon, victim injury, alcohol and children being present combined to increase the likelihood of retraction. The three most prevalent reasons for retraction and disengagement in the study by Sleath and Smith (2016) were reconciliation, wanting to get on with their lives/end of the relationship, and reasons relating to children. Interestingly, when victims are asked to assess their own risk levels there are some informative outcomes. To begin with, those who engaged with the prosecution compared to those who retracted, had higher levels of risk. Furthermore, such an outcome was based on victims being asked to predict the likelihood of the abuser re-victimising them in the next six months by physical, psychological or financial means (Weissz, 2002).

We turn now to process how the categories and factors were identified and the distinction between the two sets of statements.

6.5 Identification of categories and factors

In comparing the two sets of victim statements, it is important to bear in mind the following: to begin with, although they have not retracted on this occasion, No Retracted Statement (NRS) victims could have done so previously and may do so in the future. Similarly, those Initial Retracted Statement (IRS) victims who provided a retraction statement, may have previously not retracted their statements, or may in the future decide to see a case through to final stage. Thus, when comparing NRS and IRS, it is important to recognise that the findings provide a snapshot of the victim's decision-making process when facing the

crossroads of retraction. See Chapter 4, p.73 for a full explanation of how the NRS and IRS factors were identified.

6.6 Participants

Altogether, 51 NRS were compared to 54 IRS, with nine of the former and six of the latter being discarded as they did not provide sufficient information for the purpose of comparison. Table 6.1 shows ages (years) expressed as means and medians for both victims and abusers in the NRS and IRS categories. Using both measures, there were no striking age differences between NRS and IRS victims and abusers although the latter were about two years younger than their male partners in cases who retracted their statements (IRS). Age ranges were also broadly similar in the four resulting comparisons. In terms of relationship status, the same conclusion can be drawn despite the fact that percentage-wise more NRS couples had separated (25%) compared to their IRS counterparts (17%) and fewer IRS (10%) than NRS (16%) victims had sustained an on-off association with their abusers. In effect, there were only two more NRS victims who had separated and just four more in the IRS category who had an on/off relationship.

	NRS	IRS
Victim mean age	33.5	29.8
Abuser mean age	33.9	31.8
Victim median age	31.5	28.2
Abuser median age	35.8	29.8
Victim age range	20-57	19-57
Abuser age range	20-57	18.3-54.9

Table 6.1 Mean and median ages (years) together with age ranges for victims and abusers in the NRS and IRS categories

	NRS	IRS
In relationship	31/48	38/57
Separated	12/48	10/57
On/off	5/48	9/57

Table 6.2 The relationship status of in relationship, separated and in an on/off relationship for both NRS and IRS categories

6.7 Identifying retraction and non-retraction factors

In total, 14 no retraction factors (NRS) and 18 retraction factors (IRS) were identified according to the criteria shown in Table 6.3. Both sets of factors are organised into four categories: History (H), Emotions (E), Relationship dynamics (R), and External factors (X)

Category	Assessment factor	
HISTORY		
Category		Assessment factor
HISTORY		
	H1	<i>Short duration of previous abuse</i>
	H2	<i>Reported previous incidents to police</i>
	H3	<i>Attended court before about abuser</i>
	H4	<i>Numerous statements provided about abuser's current abusive behaviour</i>
	H5	<i>Consistency in reporting and refusing to engage with abuser and remaining separated from abuser.</i>
	H6	Previously retracted
	H7	Previous attempts at finishing relationship/on/off relationship
	H8	Previously abusive
	H9	Previously unreported abusive incidents
EMOTIONS		
	E1	<i>High level of determination in leaving/separating from abuser</i>
	E2	<i>Confronts and stands up to abuser</i>
	E3	<i>High levels of fear & concern expressed</i>
	E4	Still tied to abuser
	E5	Sympathy for abuser
	E6	Hopeful of change (learned hopefulness)
	E7	Cognitive dissonance
	E8	Unable to stand up to abuser
	E9	Lying to family/friends/police to cover up abuse
RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS		
	R1	<i>Already separated</i>
	R2	<i>Taking action to remove abuser from her life</i>

	R3	Mutual violence
	R4	Damaging duo
	R5	Continues contact post abusive incident
	R6	Mental health: victim & abuser
EXTERNAL FACTORS		
	X1	<i>Family involved and supportive</i>
	X2	<i>Employed</i>
	X3	<i>Attends hospital/doctors</i>
	X4	<i>Engaged with support agencies</i>
	X5	<i>Provides numerous statements detailing the abusive incident</i>
	X6	Does not want to press charges
	X7	Family/friends unsupportive/absent
	X8	Victim lying to family/friends to cover up abuse
	X9	Cultural pressure

Table 6.3: No Retraction (*italic*) and Retraction (**bold**) factors. Both sets of factors are situated within broader themes of history of the relationship, emotions from the victim towards the abuser, the relationship dynamics between the abuser and the victim, and external factors.

Figure 6.1 provides a visual overview of the difference in NRS and IRS across all factors featured in Table 6.3. It enables the visual representation of both the non-retraction and retraction factors across the categories identified in Table 6.3 (viz., history, emotions, relationship dynamics, external factors) and as is visible, there was overlap between NRS and IRS factors. For example, in H8 (previously abusive), both NRS and IRS feature in the factor yet there are considerably more within the IRS category whereas for X2 (employed) this featured more in the NRS category.

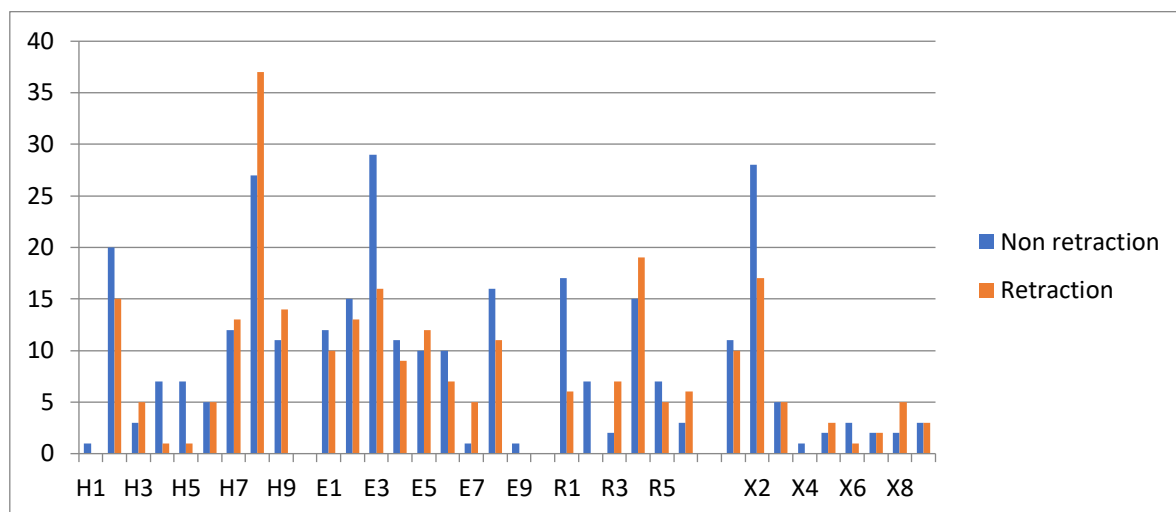


Figure 6.1: Percentage comparison of No Retraction (NRS) and Retraction (IRS) factors present.

Table 6.4 shows the top five occurring NRS and IRS factors as found within the two sets of initial statements. This allows for a comparison between the top five most frequently occurring factors for NRS and IRS statements.

Non-retraction factors	Retraction factors
1) High levels of fear	Previously abusive
2) Employed	Employed
3) Previously abusive	Damaging duo
4) Reported previous incidents to police	High levels of fear
5) Already separated	Reported previous incidents to the police

Table 6.4: Five highest ranking no retraction (NRS) and Retraction (IRS) factors.

In comparison, Table 6.5 details the eight factors with the biggest difference between NRS and IRS factors. For example, Table 6.4 demonstrates that for IRS the most commonly occurring factor is previously abusive whereas when comparing NRS and IRS, Table 6.5 shows previously abusive as not having much of a difference when cross comparing NRS and IRS.

Factor	NRS	IRS	Difference
1) High levels of fear	57%	30%	27%
2) Already separated	33%	11%	22%
3) Employed	55%	33%	22%
4) Unable to stand up to abuser	31%	18%	13%
5) Consistency in reporting	14%	2%	12%
6) Previously abusive	53%	65%	12%
7) Taking action to remove abuser	14%	2%	12%
8) Damaging duo	29%	33%	4%

Table 6.5: Percentage of women in the Non-Retracted Statement (NRS) and Initial Retracted Statement (IRS) groups relative to the reasons for retraction, featured in order of the highest difference between NRS and IRS.

6.8 Interaction of Factors

Another point of interest was to explore the relationship between the factors in terms of the frequency of interaction across the statements. The top six interaction of factors are presented in Tables 6.6, 6.7, 6.8., ranked according to highest to lowest frequency of occurrence. The analysis of the interaction between factors provides a further exploration into how the two groups of statements offer some interesting differences and similarities. For the NRS category, it seems fear is most frequently occurring factor (more on this in Chapter 8).

Factor combination	Frequency	Percentage
High levels of fear & previously abusive	16	31%
High levels of fear & confronts and stands up to abuser	16	31%
High levels of fear & employed	16	31%

Previously abusive & employed	14	27%
High levels of fear & reported previous incidents to the police	13	25%
Previously abusive & reported previous incidents to the police	12	24%

Table 6.6: Top 6 NRS interaction of factors

Table 6.7 shows the interaction of factors for the IRS statements, where previously abusive occurs in every interaction in the top six factor interaction (more on this in 6.14).

Factor combination	Frequency	Percentage
Alcohol/drugs & Previously abusive	16	30%
Previously abusive & Reported previous incidents to the police	15	28%
Previously unreported abusive incidents & previously abusive	15	28%
High levels of fear & previously abusive	12	22%
Previously abusive & previous attempts at finishing relationship	9	17%
Unable to stand up to abuser & previously abusive	9	17%

Table 6.7: Top 6 IRS interaction of factors

Table 6.8 shows an interesting contrast as well as similarities between the interaction of factors across the NRS and IRS categories. The biggest differences in the top three interaction of factors concern fear: high levels of fear and employment obtained the biggest difference where the NRS category obtained a 16% higher frequency, high levels of fear and reported previous incidents to the police occurred 14% more frequently in the NRS category and NRS showed a 9% increase in frequency of high levels of fear and previously abusive.

	NRS %	IRS %	Difference in % NRS & IRS
Damaging Duo & Previously abusive	10%	30%	20%
High levels of fear & Employed	31%	15%	16%
High levels of fear & reported previous incidents to the police	25%	11%	14%
Previously unreported abusive incidents & previously abusive	18%	28%	10%
High levels of fear & Previously abusive	31%	22%	9%
Employed & Reported previous incidents to police	18%	11%	7%

Table 6.8: Top 6 NRS & IRS factors combined- in order of difference achieved.

6.9 Differentiating between NRS and IRS

In identifying the retraction and non-retraction factors, it became apparent that although there are a few factors unique to each category, there is also considerable overlap in the top five factors between the two categories (IRS and NRS). The order in which they appeared did, however, deliver some interesting differences. Similarly, the extra exploration of the interaction of factors additionally shed further light on the nuanced differences and overall similarities across the NRS and IRS categories. Given the often repetitive pattern of DV in terms of the cycle of violence where victims leave and return, it is perhaps not surprising that there is an overlap between IRS and NRS victims.

In order to add an additional layer of understanding, a further distinction is provided in whether the retraction statements that followed in the IRS category were retracted for external or internal reasons. To avoid complexity, this was the only distinction made for the purposes of this chapter. A deeper exploration of the individual factors under the external and internal categories will follow in Chapter 7.

What follows is a breakdown and explanation of the top five retraction and no retraction factors (Table 6.4), coupled with the frequency in which they appeared in NRS and IRS (Table 6.5; Figure 6.1), and the interaction of factors in the NRS category (Table, 6.6), the interaction of factors in IRS category (Table 6.7) and the differences in the interaction of NRS and IRS factors (Table 6.8). To this end, the factors below appear in order of their descending differences between NRS and IRS victims as featured in Table 6.5. The factors are italicised to assist in readily identifying them.

6.10 High levels of fear

High levels of fear featured as the largest difference between NRS and IRS factors (28%). It achieved the highest percentage in NRS, whereas for IRS it featured as the fourth highest factor. Fear of the perpetrator is an expected emotion given the abuse victims have to endure. And although it featured in the top five factors across both NRS and IRS, it is noteworthy that for NRS victims

it constituted the highest-ranking factor in the top five and as the highest differentiating percentage between the two categories.

In terms of the interaction of factors, Table 6.6 shows *high levels of fear* was the most frequently occurring interaction factor. It appeared in the top three and was present in four out of the 6 top factors, pointing once more towards a higher occurrence of this factor for NRS compared to IRS victims. *High levels of fear* featured together with factors that indicate a victim as more independent (*employed*), utilising the police to deal with the abuse and confronting their abuser (*reported previous incidents to the police/confronts abuser*) but having gone through abuse already (*previously abusive*). The higher levels of fear from NRS victims could be due to them experiencing more fear, but equally it could also be that they are simply more willing than IRS victims, to express this fear. Conversely, *high levels of fear & previously unreported incidents to the police* was the fourth highest occurring factor in the IRS category returning to the aforementioned point of this chapter identifying similarities across NRS and IRS as well as differences. Table 6.8 shows there are differences in frequency across *high levels of fear* and *employed* (NRS 31%; IRS 15%), *reporting previous incidents to the police* (NRS 25%; IRS 11%) and *previously abusive* (NRS 31%; IRS 22%) where the NRS category obtained higher levels of frequency.

One could surmise that a victim not retracting her statement and therefore remaining ‘on board’ with a prosecution should be showing less signs of fear. This assumption would be attributed to the aforementioned cost/benefit analysis in that, by continuing to support a prosecution, she should be cognisant of the fact she will receive ‘protection’ from the CJS as a consequence of her commitment to the process. However, this promise of protection may not be sufficient to stop the fear at the time of experiencing these highly traumatic episodes of abuse, and it could be that the higher level of fear in NRS is the driving factor in remaining engaged with the CJS process. Conversely, the lower levels of expressions of fear amongst IRS victims could be explained as a consequence of these women being later on in the DV journey. In short, they have become more acquiescent to the occurrence of violence, and due to their previous experiences, are more fearful of the CJS process rather than the abuser. Thus, for IRS victims, the present findings would indicate that fear of the CJS process takes precedent over fear of the abuser. It could also be that for IRS victims, they are more aware of the fact that engaging with the CJS process

could result in being subjected to further violence from the abuser. In support of this contention, one study found that within three months of the initial CJS process commencing, 20% of victims had been threatened or assaulted again by their abuser process (Bennett, Goodman & Dutton, 1999).

Given that the IRS victims data report *previously abusive* at a 12% higher frequency one could construct fear as something that is experienced in the early part of the journey of abuse (i.e., the earlier a victim is in her journey of abuse, the less likely she is of having been abused previously, and as a result the more likely she will be in fear as it is in this instance a new feeling). Conversely, for those victims who have experienced higher levels of abuse previously, the abuse will not be such a shocking event, and coping mechanisms will be in place to deal accordingly with the abuse experienced on a frequent basis thereby resulting in a reduced sensation of fear. However, this is brought into dispute when addressing the highest occurring interaction of factors, where a difference between *high levels of fear* and *previously abusive* across NRS and IRS categories can be observed (NRS: 31%; IRS: 22%). The difficulty in providing an explanation of the interaction between *high levels of fear* and *previously abusive* points towards the need for further research that explores in more detail previous abuse- time & frequency, coupled with furthering understanding into whether the previous abuse occurs within a relationship or post-relationship abuse.

As we will see in Chapter 7, the analysis of retraction statements demonstrated victims situated across two factors: internal and external. External retraction factors were driven by a practical, solution focused narrative where the victim had found a solution outside of the CJS process. Internal retraction factors, in contrast, tend to be more focused on emotions and feelings the victims have towards their abusers.

Those IRS victims that expressed fear within their initial statements, retracted them mainly for external reasons (N= 10) as opposed to internal reasons (N= 5), and one showed mixed reasons, while another retraction statement that did not provide a motivation for retracting the statement. This outcome provides further evidence that the IRS victims could be more fearful of the CJS process (external reasons) than of their abusers, which then results in them retracting their statements to avoid the CJS process. Their lack of confidence and belief in the CJS, potentially due to their previous experiences,

is such that it leads them to retraction in an attempt to avoid the process all together.

The following are exemplary quotes from NRS (NRS statements are indicated as :1 and IRS as :2 throughout this chapter) and IRS victims capturing their expressions of fear. The percentages refer to the occurrence of expressions of fear featured across NRS and IRS statements.

34:1

It's making me feel uneasy, paranoid, I am constantly looking out of my windows at cars going past. I feel scared when I'm in bed at night because I wouldn't put it past him to put something through my letterbox, which is also affecting my sleep.

NRS: 29/51 = 57%

32:2

When xxx threw the laptop, I was frightened and ran out of the house. Because of this incident I have been left to feel very frightened and I never wanted this to happen. I cannot believe what he has done to me. I have been asked in relation to a restraining order however I have declined this at this time.

16/54= 30%

There is seemingly no difference across these two quotes in terms of the level of fear expressed. Both victims come across as very fearful. The difference across NRS and IRS is in the frequency of fear expressed across all NRS and IRS victims. This is the case for the remaining factors too, the difference is in the frequency across NRS and IRS victims.

Should a victim express *high levels of fear*, it could be indicative of her being more receptive towards allowing the CJS to offer her help and seeing the process through. Conversely, those victims not expressing signs of fear despite being subjected to high levels of abuse could be more inclined to suffer further abuse as they no longer are in fear or no longer able or willing to express fear of their abusers. These suppositions bring into relief the fact that the expression of fear forms part of the DASH risk assessment. When considering DASH, it is important to bear in mind that despite 42 police forces in England and Wales

using the instrument (Merseyside is the only force not to currently do so), it has no demonstrable predictive validity at this time (Robinson & Howarth, 2012).

Sleath and Smith (2016) found that retraction was more likely to occur in high-risk cases (high risk levels obtained from DASH risk assessments). No real explanation was proffered other than that it is interesting to note why a victim of a higher risk level would be more likely to retract. Given the findings here, it is impossible to trace coherently back to risk levels, but it is worthy of note that questions of fear, if expressed as they were in these statements (i.e., the victim is in fear), then one would also expect this to be the case in DASH. The risk level increases by two points in DASH if the first two questions on fear are answered affirmatively. Thus, one could argue that NRS victims are considered to be at greater risk than their IRS counterparts, a contention eventuating in the conclusion that a higher risk level does not necessarily equate to victim retraction. Moreover, there is an interesting potential link between risk level and a victim's 'satisfaction' in terms of the level of service they receive.

In a research study I conducted on behalf of GMP whilst still a serving officer, I looked at "customer satisfaction" amongst DV victims. One of the findings was that the higher the risk level (as assessed by the DASH risk assessment), the happier/more satisfied the victim was with the service she received. Victims even spoke of noticing a shift in the service where they suddenly had single points of contacts, their own IDVA, and were unaware this was due to their risk level increasing to the risk becoming higher. (See Appendix 2).

Arguably the better their experience with police and CJS, the less likely they were to retract. Once considered to be high risk, a victim is allocated a specially trained DV police officer and a highly trained IDVA person and could also be incorporated into the MARAC system if two high-risk incidents had occurred in the past 12 months (SafeLives, 2017).

In GMP, for example, the general rule was that if the victim scored over 14 in the DASH, the case would be investigated by the specialist DV unit. Scores below that value would be investigated by front-line officers unless there were special circumstances or an officer had made their own professional judgement on the case. Thus, for those high risk victims who have revealed externally motivated reasons for retracting (viz., who retract due to a fear of the CJS process), the more likely they are to receive better service. As a consequence, it

is less likely they might retract on that occasion or subsequently, having had an ‘improved’ level of service due to being high risk, thereby lessening any fear towards the CJS system. NRS victims showing higher levels of fear are indicative of the same being true in this data, however, as mentioned, risk levels were not explored.

Clearly, further exploration of this matter is needed to establish more concrete evidence of any links among risk level, fear, satisfaction of level of service and retraction. In this respect, it is worth bearing in mind that higher levels of fear have been conceptualised as representing an increased risk of injury both minor and severe. (Thompson, Saltzman, & Johnson, 2001). This suggestion serves to add to the importance of furthering the understanding of fear in practitioner settings such as policing or providing services such as IDVAs.

6.11 Already separated

Compared to IRS victims, 22% more NRS victims were *already separated* (NRS:33%, IRS:11%). This factor did not present in the top 6 interaction of factors for either NRS or IRS victims however. Despite post-separation abuse posing a serious risk to victims (e.g., Kurz, 1996), this difference suggests that those victims less likely to retract are already separated from their abusers. This in turn could ensure an increased sense of remaining committed to the CJS procedure as they are no longer cohabiting or in an intimate relationship. In support of this assertion, Robinson and Cook (2006) found that already being separated reduced the chance of retraction by 77%.

In terms of risk levels, this could potentially place the NRS at a lower risk than the IRS due to their separation (e.g., Robinson & Howarth, 2012). Table 6.2 shows however, that this factor did not feature across the top five factors for NRS or IRS. Thus, there is a low occurrence in the number of victims from the data set, yet a difference across the two categories NRS and IRS. Of the six IRS victims, they retracted mostly on external grounds (N= 3), and the others for internal reasons (N= 2), and a mixture of internal and external (N= 1). Quotes are not included in this theme as it does not lend itself to anything other than whether or not they are in a relationship. Future research should seek to establish the length of the victim and abuser being *already separated* to

establish whether there are any differences in the length of separation between those who have been separated for a long versus short period of time.

6.12 Employed

The effect of unemployment on DV has been found to differ between men and women. For example, Anderberg, Rainer, Wasworth & Wilson, (2013) looked at unemployment levels between men and women and the rate of DV incidents occurring. Higher unemployment levels for women was found to increase the risk of DV whereas higher unemployment levels for men reduced the risk of DV occurring. This difference was thought to be due to, in times of high unemployment levels, that men place more value, financially, on the relationship in terms of the dual income and increased financial security they stand to benefit from. Thus, it gives rise to a decrease in DV during periods of high unemployment rates. For women, however, at periods of high unemployment rates they are more likely to stay within an abusive relationship.

Employed featured jointly in second of the top 5 factors (Table 6.4) for both NRS and IRS categories, yet there was a difference of 22% in favour of the NRS victims being *employed* compared to those who were IRS (NRS: 55%, IRS: 33%).

Additionally, this was the second highest occurring factor amongst the top five NRS factors whereas it featured as third position in IRS. This difference could be indicative of less financial dependence on the abusers. As a consequence, NRS victims could be less likely to return to their abusers, and potentially serving as an important marker of a victim not retracting their statement.

Employed features together with *high levels of fear* and *previously abusive* as third and fourth respectively in the top 6 non-retraction factors, where it did not feature in the top 6 IRS factors. *High levels of fear* and *employed* obtained a 16% difference across NRS and IRS (NRS 31%; IRS 15%). This could be seen to be in line with the literature claiming economic independence from the abuser as being a strong predictor of a woman leaving an abusive relationship (e.g. Walby & Allen, 2004). *Employed* featuring frequently in the data could be explained by means of it being recorded more consistently within statements. There is a separate box in each statement form that stipulates the victims' employment.

All factors that have an interaction with *employed* are indicative of a victim making efforts to distance herself from their abuser and leaving. The exception being the previously abusive factor which does not distinguish between whether the abuse has occurred within a current relationship or in a previously abusive relationship or whether the abuse is post separation abuse.

Thus, those victims who are unemployed could be more financially reliant on their abusers, therefore affecting their decision to retract. The present findings intimate that being *employed* and subjected to a positive action policy could result in fewer retraction statements being made. In terms of the subsequent retraction statements made by women who were *employed*, the majority retracted for external reasons (N= 9) and to a lesser extent for internal reasons (N=5), or for mixed reasons (N=4). So, overall no marked difference in the reasons why statements were retracted. No quotes are included as it is the distinction between employment and unemployment that is key.

6.13 Unable to stand up to the abuser

The inability to stand up to the abuser featured 13% more frequently in NRS compared to IRS and as the fourth NRS factor, but not as one of top five IRS factors. In terms of the interaction between factors, *unable to stand up to the abuser* and *previously abusive* featured as the sixth IRS factor. Feeling unable to stand up to an abuser and having experienced previous abusive of them seems a logical sequence of feelings to have, particularly in the IRS category as it would follow feeling both of these might lead to a retraction taking place especially for those abusers who put pressure on victims to provide a retraction statement.

Being unable to stand up to the abuser could typically be constructed as a reason as to why an IRS victim retracts her statement. In this vein, the abuser exerts pressure on the victim not to report in the first place, and more so for her to retract the statement should the victim take that step. The data paint a different picture, however which perhaps goes together with the counterintuitive higher levels of fear being shown amongst NRS victims. Thus, the fact they express more fear and seem incapable of standing up to their abusers may together account for why they do not retract their statement, and in fact are in need of the CJS to stand up for them. In this sense, the victims seek protection against their abusers from the CJS as they do not feel able to do so themselves.

The following quote highlights this theme for a NRS victim subjected to several incidents of DV. It would appear from her closing comment that she is *en route* to retracting her initial statement. But as with those NRS victims showing *high levels of fear*, it seems those unable to stand up to their abusers are more likely to seek the help of the police to tackle their abusers.

22:1

I want to start afresh but do not feel like I can do this until xxx is out of my life. I want him to leave me alone but he won't even when the police tell him not to he still phones me. I am so scared of him that I do not know how to tell him "no" because I feel like he will hurt me.

NRS = 16/54 = 31%

For victims unable to stand up to their abusers in the IRS category, although occurring less frequently (N= 11), the reasons for this state-of-affairs are similar to those in the NRS category. Also, those who mention struggling/or *being unable to stand up to the abuser*, in their retraction statements tend to situate their reason for retracting equally in internal terms (N= 5), and with external (N=5) and mixed (N=1) explanations being noticeably fewer. The following extract illustrates this point:

43:2

On entering the lounge xxx has without warning kicked me wearing his work boots to the right hip. The force of the kick caused me to fall to the ground. On the way down I have struck my head on a wall socket causing a lump to my head. My hip is sore and bruised now. I have then got to my feet and was crying asking him to stop. Xxx has taken hold with his hands around my neck and was strangling me. He was also causing numerous scratches with his right hand. He has punched me to the left cheek causing swelling. I was crying hysterically and screaming for help. Xxx has not stopped, he has continued to attack me. He has then picked up a full ashtray from a side table and thrown this over me. I have then began to plead with xx to leave the address. Somehow, he has got his belongings together and then picked up his daughter and walked out of the door in to the communal hall. A few minutes later there has been a knock at the door. I have opened the door and xxx was there with his daughter. He told me he had

left something in the flat. He has come back inside and has begun to plead with me telling me he was sorry and that he loved me. I was scared now believing that he was about to attack me again. Once back inside the flat xxx told me that he and his daughter were going to stay for the night. At this point I was really afraid and frightened. In order to try and keep the peace and protect myself from being further assaulted I have agreed. I told him that he had to leave in the morning to which he agreed. After some time xxx has then begun to call me names such as slag and slapper. He then began to accuse me of sleeping with other men. In order to keep him happy and prevent myself from being further assaulted I have simply agreed with what he was saying and have allowed him to stay the night.

This excerpt highlights just how closely linked *fear* and *unable to stand up to the abuser* can be. Having provided a second initial statement detailing further abuse, this victim then went on to provide a mixed message about what it is that she wants:

I want to stand up in court and for xxx to know how I feel and what I've had to go through. Xxx needs to know his behaviour is unacceptable. I have been asked if I want to apply for a restraining order. I have decided that I don't want one. I want him punished for what he's done but it's not that I never want to see him again. I want to give xxx the opportunity to ring me and apologise.

IRS= 11/54 = 20%

6.14 Previously abusive

The second highest ranking factor for IRS victims was whether the abuser had been *previously abusive*, assuming third position for NRS victims. There was a 12% difference, with IRS having had higher levels of *previously abusive* within their statements (viz., making more frequent mention of previous abuse in IRS statements). *Previously abusive* as a stand alone retraction factor featured as the highest occurring factor and featured at a 12% higher occurrence than the NRS category.

Table 6.7 demonstrates that the most frequently occurring factor in the interaction of retraction factors was *previously abusive* which occurred in all of the top 6 interaction of factors for the IRS category. *Previously abusive* and *damaging duo* featured as the highest occurring interaction of factors in the IRS category, and produced the biggest difference in frequency across NRS and IRS (NRS 10%; IRS 30%). *Previously abusive* and other interactions also featured in the top 6. In the NRS category, *previously abusive* and *high levels of fear* featured as the highest interaction of factors in the NRS category and the fifth in the differences between NRS and IRS. Finally, *high levels of fear* and *previously abusive* featured as the fifth highest difference in frequency (NRS 31%; IRS 22%).

The findings of Robinson and Cook (2006) support some of the findings around retraction and previous abuse in that victims in their study who had experienced previous abuse were more likely to retract (57%) than not (43%).

Previously abusive in this data meant whether the victim made mention of this previous abusive episodes in her statement. The case files were not checked to verify this and as such previous abuse here could also refer to unreported previous abuse. The following victim describes the progression from the minor level violence initially to it increasing to becoming more violent as time went on:

5:1

Victim describes relationship as good for first 6 months. After this initial period, abuser would randomly poke the victim which then progressed to him grabbing the victim. There were a lot of arguments during which he would grab her by her face. DP then started pushing the victim, and "from this point xxx got quite violent with me." Previous assaults: punching numerous times, biting her face, threatening to snap her neck, and dragging around by her hair. All these incidents have been reported to police and the abuser was due to attend court for all of these. (one month ahead of the statement date)

$NRS = 27/51 = 53\%$

4:2

In the past, I've had a lot of problems with domestic violence with xxx. I have had to ring the police over 10 times because of xxx assaulting me when he gets

really drunk. In the past, I've been punched in the face and strangled by xxx. I have also been pushed around and thrown about by him.

$$IRS = 36/54 = 65\%$$

Both quotes detail previous abuse, but it would appear from the 5:1 quote that the police have been more heavily involved in the previous abuse due to the victim reporting it and attending court whereas victim 4:2 refers to ringing the police, but no indication of whether that led to making an official report to the police.

Given the higher frequency of *previously abusive* as expressed by the IRS victims in their statements, this result is open to explanation in one of two ways. Firstly, it could be argued that the more a victim is abused, the more it translates into her becoming increasingly situated further along her repetitive journey of violence. In a sense, it leads to 'normalising' or acquiescing to the violence to the point that continuing to report it, from a cost/benefit analysis, is not deemed worth it. It raises questions such as has she tried and 'failed' in terms of engaging with the CJS previously? It also suggests continuing to engage with the CJS is deemed more difficult compared to returning to the abuser, with the victim being (more) familiar with the latter. Interestingly, *previously abusive* and *reported previous incidents* to the police featured slightly more frequently in IRS victims (NRS 24%; IRS 28%). However, when addressing the interaction this is brought into question when looking at the interaction between *high levels of fear* and *previously abusive*, *previously abusive* and *employed* featuring more frequently in the NRS category.

Secondly, from a practitioner's perspective, whilst caution should always be applied in making judgements about a particular case, exploring the ways of identifying signs of retraction, high levels of previous abuse could suggest a retraction may follow. For those cases of IRS where previous abuse occurred, of the total 34 statements, the majority were retracted on internal grounds (N =20), and the rest split equally across external (N=7) and mixed (N=7). With most of these victims citing internal reasons for retracting, there is a case to be made that such reasons point to the victims being more inclined, for example, to empathise with their abuser leading to forgiving for them for their abusive actions. In doing so, the cycle of violence continues.

6.15 Consistency in reporting and refusing to engage with abuser

This featured 12% higher in frequency across NRS compared to IRS but did not feature in the interaction of factors in NRS or IRS. Although it did not feature in the respective top five of NRS and IRS when comparing this factor across the two, there was nonetheless a marginal difference. It would be expected that those who do not end up retracting show more of this consistency in reporting the abuse. One could also query why it did not feature more in the NRS. One answer could be that the thread of chaos in DV is such that consistency in general is perhaps not such a prevalent feature after all.

The next victim actually provided three statements in total (although only one of them, 96:1 is shown below. 96:1 clearly displays various methods in which she continues to prevent the abuser from contacting her.

96:1

The landline phone stated to ring. I have an answerphone which I use to screen all my calls. I phoned the police again to report xxx had turned up at my address. I have told him so many times to leave me alone which he refuses to do. These incidents have left me feeling distressed and harassed as I do not want xxx to contact me. I do not want xxx to ever contact me again.

$NRS = 7/51 = 14\%$

6:2

Since I split up with xxx he has not taken it well. He thinks we can make the relationship work but I know that is not the case. He has been calling my mobile and landline numbers sometimes 15 times a day. If I answered he would shout abuse down the phone. He would accuse me of having a boyfriend and not coming for the kids. I stopped answering and even bought a new phone but he got the number as he looks at the kids' phones. When the call would go through to answerphone he would leave abuse. These calls were not welcome and caused me to be very upset.

$IRS = 1/5 = 2\%$

The 6:2 victim then goes on to provide three more statements after each new incident occurring one after the other. Thus, both victims provide multiple

statements after the abusive incident has occurred. Despite these multiple statements, 6:2 still goes on to retract her statement. All told, there was only one IRS statement in which retraction was due to internal reasons.

6.16 Taking action to remove abuser from victim's life

The contrast between NRS and IRS in frequency of occurrence raises at least one interesting point despite the fact it did not amount to a marked difference nor did it feature in any of the interaction of factors for either NRS or IRS victims. For IRS, it only was only evident in one statement whereas for the NRS category it featured in seven statements. Although only involving a sparse number of relevant statements, it is nevertheless interesting to speculate that NRS victims might display more signs of a determination to remove themselves from their abusers compared to their IRS counterparts.

The following excerpt from a NRS victim illustrates a marked determination to keep the abuser out of her life as much as she can, given his relentless attempts at contacting her. To achieve her goal, she supported a harassment warning, uses the answerphone to screen all calls, and changed shopping venues, as well as her daily routine more generally:

90:1

I called the police and they came round and helped me move my things out. I was warned by the police not to return to my husband as I would risk my baby being taken away from me. I officially left xxx at this point.

She then moves to Manchester whilst her mother allowed her husband to have contact with the son in Liverpool.

$\text{NRS} = 7/51 = 14\%$

The following victim, although showing signs of taking action to remove the abuser from her life, uses a key phrase “until he can behave properly” thereby leaving the door open to his return and potentially indicating the likelihood of her impending retraction:

13:2

Over the past few weeks I have realised that he does not love me and I don't want to be with him anymore. The argument started again in the morning. He asked if I meant what I said and I told him yes. Xxx was getting more and more upset with me because I was insistent that it was over xxx cannot control his anger and I do not want the children to grow up seeing him behave like this on a daily basis I want him to stay away from me until he can behave properly in front of the children and treat me with some level of respect.

$$\text{IRS} = 1/54 = 2\%$$

In this case, the IRS retraction statement was made for external motivations.

6.17 Reported previous incidents to the police

Perhaps somewhat unsurprisingly when considering the reporting behaviour of victims, NRS victims reported 12% more previous incidents than IRS victims (NRS: 39%, IRS: 28%). It was the fourth highest ranking factor in NRS and the fifth for IRS. In terms of interaction of factors, it occurred as fifth together with *high levels of fear* and sixth with *previously abusive* for NRS factors but was the second highest interaction of factors together with *previously abusive*. In terms of differences between NRS and IRS interaction of factors, *high levels of fear* and *reported previous incidents to the police* featured as third biggest difference (NRS: 25%; IRS 11%), suggesting that fear encourages more frequently those NRS victims to report the previously occurred abuse. Similarly, there was a difference in *employed* and *reported previous incidents to the police* where this occurred at a higher frequency in NRS (18%) compared to IRS (11%). However, for *previously abusive* and *reported previous incidents to the police*, this occurred at a slightly higher rate for IRS (28%) than for NRS (24%), reflecting that despite a higher occurrence of previous abuse in IRS victims, when coupled with their reporting behaviour, there is not much difference between the two sets of victims.

In terms of reporting previous incidents to the police, it would seem, therefore, that those women who do not retract could be more inclined to report previous incidents to the police, and to have more confidence in the CJS process as mentioned previously. The IRS victims, on the other hand, might be more inclined to avoid reporting as they might not have the intrinsic motivation and

support to see the process through. Moreover, given their overall more frequently occurring levels of previous abuse and the fact they have retracted on this occasion, they may be inclined to downplay incidents and so perhaps not to report previous incidents despite making mention of them in the initial statement.

One explanation for this could be the fact that victims who retracted their statement on previous occasions, utilise the police to remove the immediate danger but once this has subsided, no longer wish to continue along the criminal justice path. Quotes are not included for this theme as it does not lend itself to anything other than whether or not the report was reported to the police. In terms of retraction, the motivations were mainly internal (N=8), with slightly less for external (N=6) and one mixed (N= 1).

6.18 The damaging duo

The third most frequently occurring IRS factor was whether alcohol and/or drugs played a part in the relationship dynamics for either the abuser or the victim or both. Such a factor did not feature in the top five for NRS victims. In fact, *damaging duo* figured as one of the smallest differences between NRS and IRS, namely, only 4% (see Table 6.2). Furthermore, where drugs and alcohol featured, it was evident that it applied to both the victim and the abuser. Similarly, the present study did not find a notable difference between victim and abuser in terms of alcohol/drug abuse issues and the majority retracted for internal reasons (N=12) and less for external reasons (N=6), with just one for mixed reasons (N=1).

Conversely however, in terms of the interaction of factors, *damaging duo* and *previously abusive* were the highest occurring interactions for the IRS category (NRS 10%; IRS 30%) and achieved the biggest difference between the two categories. This contributes to the suggestion alcohol/drugs might be a bigger influence in the decision to retract due to perhaps the chaos it creates for the victim in the clarity of their decision-making process.

Alcohol and drug dependence are a common feature of DV, often affecting both victim and perpetrator (Downs, 2001; Gondolf, 1999; Ogle & Baer, 2003). In terms of retraction, alcohol abuse by the perpetrator can play a role in the victim's decision to retract (Robinson & Cook, 2006). However,

Sleath and Smith (2016) found no predictive relationships between alcohol/drug abuse and retraction.

In the case of IRS victims, it could be due to the fact that alcohol/drugs do contribute towards the cycle of violence in providing an externalisation of why the violence occurs. (i.e., it is not the fault of either the victim or the abuser, the alcohol/drugs are to blame). For NRS victims, it ranked as the seventh most frequently occurring factor whereas for IRS victims it was third, suggesting that in NRS cases there is slightly less of a chaotic lifestyle thereby enabling the victims to continue in their efforts to seek justice against their abusers. This suggestion also dovetails with the issue of the internal and external reasons for retracting as discussed in Chapter 7.

For the following victim, she has become accustomed to the abuser's behaviour, which she believes is caused by his cannabis consumption. Despite him finding ways around the behaviour and continuing to ask about them getting back together, she has had enough to the point of wanting to end the relationship:

14:1

I told him I needed "time and space" and asked him to "back off". But in my mind the relationship's over. But I'm just trying to get a break from the hassle of xxx. He gets paranoid due to smoking weed every day, which is the main reason I ended the relationship.

$\text{NRS} = 15/51 = 29\%$

6.2:

My son went straight into foster care; this was because of my past history of drug abuse (I used to sniff butane gas). Xxx rolled in about 5.30 am. He was extremely drunk.

$\text{IRS} = 18/54 = 33\%$

The above extract (6.2) reveals a chaotic lifestyle that encompasses both the victim and the abuser. As such, it could be a contributing factor as to why the victim decides to retract her statement.

6.19 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a range of insights into the factors that differentiate between NRS and IRS victims captured within their initial statements. It should be stressed that although this chapter has highlighted differences between the NRS and IRS category of statements, the similarities and overlap across the factors are as much noteworthy. It has focused on those factors delivering the most frequently occurring differences between the two groups, as well as ordering the top five factors for each respective category group. In doing so, it has been possible to understand, at the point of obtaining the evidence from the victim (i.e. taking the statement) the potential underlying reasons as to why victims retract or stay on board a prosecution, based on what is contained within their respective initial statements. As a means of further exploring and understanding the issue of retraction, the contrast of external and internal reasons pertaining to this act served to highlight where differences appear between NRS and IRS and bring to light possible underlying motivations in the case of IRS victims who retract their statement.

Returning to the research question: “Are there any salient recognisable differences in the initial statements provided by those victims who continue to engage and those victims who go on to provide a retraction statement”, the analysis in the chapter demonstrates that there are more similarities and overlap than any salient differences. Fear being an exception here in that the level of fear between NRS and IRS was the highest in NRS, had the biggest difference between NRS and IRS and occurred most frequently in the interaction of factors.

Nevertheless, the overlap, similarities and small differences in frequency of occurrence still paint an interesting picture and provide a platform from which to explore this area further. Future research should be centred upon identifying in more detail issues such as fear, time periods around *already separated* and *previously abusive* to understand more fully how these concepts affect decision making around retraction.

Having explored the main differences between NRS and IRS victims and touched upon the differences amongst the retraction victims in terms of external and internal motivations, Chapter 7 addresses in more depth and detail the issues surrounding retraction by means of analysing retraction statements.

CHAPTER 7: Remonstrating retraction. “But I love him”

7.1 Introduction

Findings from previous studies suggest that terminating an intimate relationship as soon as it turns abusive is not a common occurrence. The same body of research further reveals that before the relationship is terminated permanently, victims will leave and return multiple times to the abusive partner, thus indicating that most women affected by DV stay, at least temporarily (Ellsberg, Heise, Peña, Agurto, & Winkwist, 2001; Fugate, Landis, Riordan, Naureckas, & Engel, 2005; Stark, 2007). It is during this process of leaving and returning that a retraction statement could take place, although this chapter will seek to demonstrate that such a statement does not merely signify an attempt by a victim to leave nor reinstate the relationship with the abuser, but also decisions around not wanting to attend court or having found alternative solutions to the abuse.

Having examined in the previous chapter ‘Reacting to retraction’, which looked at the essential differences and similarities between the statements of victims who go on to retract and those who do not, this chapter will seek to broaden the discussion on retraction further by exploring what motivates a victim to retract. Reasons for retraction are typically situated around children, reigniting the relationship, not wanting to be alone (e.g., Hester, 2006) or learned helplessness (Lystad, 1975; Seligman, Maier & Geer, 1968). Other factors influencing the decision to retract have been mentioned previously.

7.2 Research questions

The anecdote referred to in the preface of this thesis in terms of the officers’ reactions to receiving news of an impending retraction statement (“but I love him”) as simplistic as it may seem, serves to open for discussion three important questions that will be addressed in this chapter:

1. Is retraction purely driven by the emotions the victim has for the abuser?
2. What are the reasons victims decide to disengage from the CJS?

3. By furthering our understanding of the different types of victims and motivations for retraction, what policy implications can we suggest to agencies involved in this stage of the CJS process?

7.3 Situating retraction

From a victim's perspective, retraction serves as a means by which a halt is put on reporting their abusers. Thus, it is a tool with which the victim regains control and changes the direction in which she wishes matters to go. As shown in the previous chapter and other research (e.g., Dutton, Hart, Kennedy, & Williams, 1991) the decision to make the initial report to the police rarely arises through a stable, carefully constructed decision-making process. Rather, it is often due to an abusive incident having just occurred and the victim needing immediate assistance from the police. Although the moment in which the initial statement is obtained, often just after DV has occurred, provides invaluable insight into the victim's decision-making progress, it does not offer as much for longer-term consistency in the commitment to the CJS in these processes. In reality as we saw in Chapter 5, the decision to report is the product of a complex web of factors: a heightened level of violence, desperation to end the abuse momentarily, together with pressures from others to report, whilst at the same time taking into account the safety of the children. Furthermore, the initial reporting process can arise as a result of a chaotic, frenetic scenario riddled with lots of confusion and anguish. Given this context, within which the initial statement can be provided, it is hardly surprising that a retraction statement may follow.

At face value, it would seem a retraction statement offers a practitioner very little given the average number of words contained within this data set ($N = 217$). In a sense, the typical brevity of the retraction statement could be indicative of the police's habit of dealing with the reoccurring violence in an incident-per-incident manner, so failing to put together the pieces of a much larger puzzle.

For police officers, retraction could symbolise an unwillingness of the victim to accept the help offered thus far and give rise to frustration and lack of empathy becoming manifest in the continuing interaction between police officer

and victim. In my own policing experience, the sense of frustration was particularly heightened when taking a retraction statement from a victim in whose case I had invested significant amounts of time (as referred to in the preface). In the moment of retraction, the victim status, already tenuous in DV, is threatened further by her going against the course of action the police officer has advocated. Returning to the comparison of a salesperson clinching a deal, the retraction statement represents the deal falling through and the salesperson not getting the bonus (*viz.*, charging the abuser) as expected.

Traditionally, victims' responses to DV have been couched in terms of women behaving passively for putting up with the abuse evident as, for example, in theories such as learned helplessness (Walker, 1979). The expectation that victims will leave as soon as the abuser turns physical is a commonly held one, and if victims do not leave instantly, they are quickly categorised as helpless and passive (Ellsberg *et al.*, 2001; Fugate *et al.*, Stark, 2007). Encouragingly, more recent research portrays them as cognisant and dynamic actors rather than passive victims despite their tendency not to leave their abusers immediately (Akers & Kaukinen, 2009; Kim & Gray, 2008; Liang, Goodman., Tummala-Narra & Weintraub, 2005). The external factors for retraction place the victim with a determined narrative and seeing the retraction process through a practical, solution-focussed lens. A selection of extracts from retraction statements made by victims exemplify these factors in compelling ways.

We turn now to the distinction between external and internal factors. To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that it is not a mutually exclusive distinction. Take for example, the emotion labelled 'fear'. In the case of DV victims, they can fear the abusive behaviour of their partner to such an extent that their thought processes become suffused with irrationality. In this sense, this emotional state of mind is largely an internally driven process. In contrast, fear may encompass an aversion to attending court due, for example, to a recognition of the shame and humiliation it can engender. As such, it constitutes a more externally driven process. Treating emotions in this way has similarities with what others have termed internal and external mood induction (*e.g.*, Riquelme, Radovic, Castro, & Turnbull, 2015). As such, some overlap exists amongst the external and internally categorised victims as shown in Figure 7.1.

7.4 Participants

Having compared 51 initial statements that were not retracted (NRS) versus 54 initial statements that were retracted (IRS) in Chapter 6, here 60 retraction statements are analysed. Thus, the 54 retraction statements from the IRS sample were analysed with an additional 6 statements to obtain a 60-statement sample. The additional statements were obtained at random from GMP and selected following the criteria as described in Chapter 4 from across the 12 divisions of GMP. These statements follow on from the initial statement where the victim has changed her mind and details her decisions as to why she is retracting in a statement. The statements were analysed by means of thematic analysis.

Table 7.1 shows details around the ages of the victims and abusers and Table 7.2 depicts the relationship status. Interestingly, as shown in Table 7.2, most (63%) of the victims were in a relationship with their abusers at the time of providing the retraction statements.

Victim mean age	30.1
Abuser mean age	31.6
Victim median age	28.3
Abuser median age	29.7
Victim age range	19-57
Abuser age range	18.3-54.9

Table 7.1 Mean and median ages (years) together with age ranges for victims and abusers in 60 retraction statements.

In relationship	38/60 (63%)
Separated	12/60 (20%)
On/off	10/60 (17%)

Table 7.2 The respective relationship status of victims and abusers in 60 retraction statements

7.5 External and internal retraction factors

Table 7.3 below shows ten factors (where children are classed as one despite featuring across both internal and external) situated across external and internal

factors. A statement referring to children that contained a majority of internal factors would be classed in the internal category and vice versa. The most frequently occurring factor was the internally based factor of wanting the relationship to start again or continue. Thus, the officers' "but I love him" response is not without any evidence that this sentiment is a commonly occurring reason for retraction, and indeed the most frequently occurring reason in this data. However, the data here show victims' motivations for retraction are more varied than just wanting to return to the abuser due to their feelings for them.

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Victim ends relationship thereby finding a solution</i>	13	22%
<i>Fear of the CJS process</i>	10	17%
<i>I just wanted him to stop</i>	4	7%
<i>Alternative solutions to CJS</i>	4	7%
Wants the relationship to start again/continue	23	38%
Shows sympathy towards abuser	18	30%
Self-blaming	8	13%
Alcohol (either victim/abuser/both)	7	12%
1. First time abuser been violent	6	10%
Children: internal	9	15%
Children: external	10	17%

Table 7.3 External (*italics*) and internal (*bold*) factors and their frequency.

A visual representation of the internal and external factors across each statement is displayed in Figure 7.1. It displays the 60 retraction statements and provides a visual overview of how both factors (internal and external) are situated across the statements. Thus, it is clear that some retraction statements feature only internal factors for retraction (e.g., statement 22) whereas others feature only external factors (e.g., statement 11) whereas most feature a mixture of both internal and external factors in varying degrees. Figure 7.1 highlights the above discussion on internal versus external in displaying the high number of statements that contain a mixture of the two.

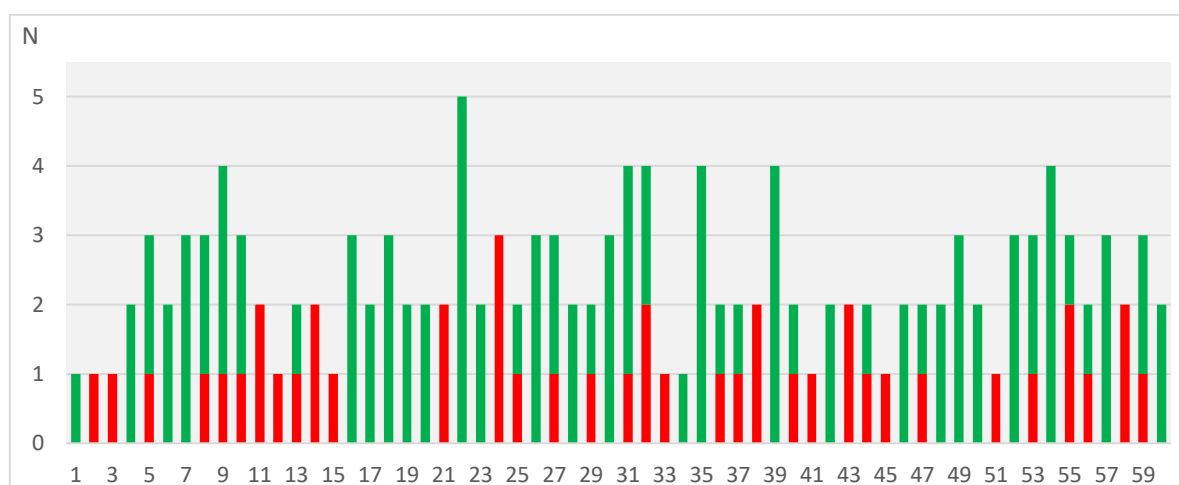


Figure 7.1: Number of internal (light grey) and external (dark grey) factors across the 60 statements.

We turn now to examining closely the external factors apparent in the retraction statements.

7.6 External retraction factors

The following four factors were identified as external factors:

- victim ends relationship thereby finding a solution
- fear of CJS process
- “I just wanted him/ it to stop.”
- alternative solutions to CJS found

7.7 Victim ends relationship thereby finding a solution

Although similar to requiring alternative solutions to the CJS, here the victim takes action by ending her relationship, and seems determined that this course of action is sufficient to halt the abuse and keep her away from the abuse and abuser:

25:2

I want to formally retract the allegation of assault I made against xxx. The reason is because the relationship is now over and I am arranging for contact and visiting with the children via a 3rd party. Xxx will have no reason to come to this address. I have been informed by the police that this statement will be presented to the crown prosecution service and that I may be summonsed to court.

There is no sign of any emotional content here. Rather, the victim has taken the matter in her own hands and found the appropriate alternative solution of ending the relationship and sees no need to follow the CJS route. As she has assumed control of her situation, she no longer requires the services of the CJS. Moreover, she clearly does not see a need for his actions to be held accountable in a criminal court of law:

11:2

I now wish to retract my statement. I am a student at xxx university and I have very important exams coming up in the next few months. I also have a 13 month old child and all the tension and stress caused by potential police prosecution is too much for me. I am unable to focus on the exams and looking after my child as a result of it. I have not been forced into making this decision. I will not be contacting him in the future and want to get on with my life with my son as well as concentrating on my exam. If the case against xxx continued I would not like to go to court.

Here, the victim has seemingly more important concerns focused on her university exams and her son, and having ended the relationship, views a prosecution as taking up unnecessary time and creating yet more stress in her life. Thus, in terms of her decision-making, the ending of the relationship seems sufficient to satisfy the victim that she will be able to continue with an abuse-

free life, with the concerns regarding the prosecution outweighing any concerns she may have about the abuser. This sentiment of the ending of the relationship representing the end of the abuse could be deemed as ill-advised given the prevalence of post-separation abuse (e.g., Brownridge, 2006).

7.8 Fear of the CJS process

The retraction statement of victim 2:2 below clearly denotes a fear of process, in particular attending court and the sense of agency in the statement is quite clear. She expressly states what it is she wishes to happen even though she is not prepared for her daughter or herself to attend court. She is clear in the relationship being over and on what form of protection she is seeking (viz., a civil route of action against her abuser in the form of a restraining order as opposed to following the CJS process of attending court):

2:2

Since providing the statement I have not heard from him, he has not been in touch since. I have now decided I do not want to give evidence in court I am terrified at the thought of going to court, I have never been to court and I don't want to go. I also do not want to allow my daughter to give evidence. I feel like she is too young to have to go to crown court and do not want to put her in that position.

Even though I do not want to go to court and am therefore withdrawing my support for this case I would like the court to still consider issuing a restraining order to xxx. I do not want to be in a relationship with him and feel a restraining order would give me the protection I need from him to stop him from coming to the address.

A similar rationale is offered in the next statement extract:

21:2

I wish to retract my statement I originally gave. I have not been put under pressure to give this statement. The reason I'm giving it is because I do not wish to attend court. If I had to attend court it fills me with dread and I do not feel comfortable standing up in front of a judge explaining all my personal on goings. I'd be concerned also what people might think of me. Xxx has not

contacted me since he was arrested and I feel he no longer will. I think he now knows the relationship is over and I am happy to leave it as it is. I'm going to see how things go. And if I have any problems with him in the future, I will look to take civil orders in relation to a restraining order against him. But this will be done through civil action.

Both victims wish to take action against their abusers, but not by means of going through a criminal court. Instead they want to do so by means of civil action, which could for example, lead to a restraining order being put in place.

The fear of attending court can be linked to a sense of shame and being publicly humiliated. Feelings of shame and embarrassment are common reasons for not reporting DV (e.g., Durose *et al.*, 2005; Felson *et al.*, 2002; Langan & Innes, 1986) it would thus make sense for this to also follow through into the stage of attending court. Giving evidence in court about a personal intimate relationship is understandably a daunting prospect and one that professionals, particularly police, can overlook when encouraging victims to attend court and being critical of those who do not. Thus, these victims recognised that attending court could be akin to engaging in a process of being victimised all over again. Referred to as secondary victimisation: "... negative social or societal reaction in consequence of the primary victimisation and is experienced as further violation of legitimate rights or entitlements by the victim" (Montada, 1994, p. 314; see also Orth, 2002). The criminal justice system often plays a role in causing secondary victimisation (Fattah, 1997; Gutheil, Bursztajn, Brodsky, & Strasburger, 2000; Koss, 2000; Symonds, 1975), which can be particularly prominent in rape prosecutions (e.g., Wheatcroft, Wagstaff, & Moran, 2009).

The implications of this finding suggest more resources are required in terms of supporting a victim attending court to address the fear of the CJS process and minimise retraction statements being made due to this fear. Thus, measures such as those provided under the Criminal Justice Act section 116 2e provide guidance for building a prosecution when the victim expresses fear of attending court. Special measures can alleviate some of this fear by providing screens and video links (where the victim is cross-examined via a video that is streamed live into the courtroom). Further research is needed to establish in more detail how fear of the CJS process manifests itself: When it begins, which

part of the process the victim is in fear of and most importantly what can be done to address this fear.

Given the above discussion of fear and how this seems to be directed towards the CJS process rather than the abuser, it is perhaps even more pertinent to consider the victim's needs in court. The following external factor situates the victim finding a solution to the abuse by calling the police which puts a momentary halt to the abuse which is what the victims here are interested in.

7.9 "I just wanted it to stop"

The initial intention in calling the police is often to have the abuser removed, to make the abuse stop. (Felson *et al.*, 2002). However, in the current system of policing domestic abuse from a positive action framework, that intention quickly translates into the victim being sometimes forced unwillingly or unknowingly into the CJS system. With the end result for some being the victim providing a retraction statement as it was never her intention to enter the CJS in the first instance. The following two retraction statements serve to illustrate this dilemma:

5:2

I contacted the police following a domestic incident with my boyfriend. The police attended and I explained to them that I had been assaulted by xxx and the police arrested him. Following his arrest, I gave an account of the incident to the police in the form of a statement but declined to sign this because I only wanted the police to remove xxx from my address and had not wanted him to be charged with any offences.

It is clear from the outset that this victim does not want to follow the CJS route and prosecute the abuser. Her intention in calling the police is to have him removed. The question then arises as to if the victim makes it clear she does not wish to prosecute her abuser, should the police still be taking an initial statement and be prosecuting him until the point of her having to provide a retraction statement to halt the CJS process? An answer to the question is twofold: 1. The police in this scenario, given the pro-arrest policy, are bound in theory to push forward prosecuting the abuser until a definitive halt ends the process, which is

in this case is achieved by means of a retraction statement, and 2. Given that the victim made it clear from the outset she did not wish to support a prosecution as indicated by her not having read her initial statement before signing it, it is likely a prosecution would not be accomplished due to the lack of support from the victim, resulting in a waste of resources in the police's attempt to force the victim into a CJS process against her abuser:

14.2

When I phoned the police on the night I just wanted xxx to be removed from the address due to everything getting out of hand. I did not want to get this far. I didn't realise that I even made a statement on the night I just told the officers what happened and I never even read my statement before I signed it. I was in a terrible state on the night.

It is clear in her retraction statement that the purpose for her contacting the police was to have the abuser removed, for the abuse to be stopped.

Misunderstanding by the victim about the meaning of providing that initial statement is also obvious. As in the Bennet *et al.* (1999) study, confusion about the CJS process is evident here. In addition, it highlights the timing of the statement versus the state of mind of the victim, putting into question whether it is productive to obtain an initial statement when the incident has only just occurred.

The following external factor results from victims not wanting to go through the formal criminal court procedures but actively seeking alternative solutions such as those akin to RJ or finding help for the abuser's issues with drugs and alcohol.

7.10 Alternative solutions to CJS required

The victim is often clear in what solution she seeks to the ongoing abuse against her, which can be far removed from prosecuting their abusers in the prescribed manner (Ford, 1991; Ford & Regoli, 1993). Within this data, those alternative solutions are linked to the abuser getting help with his alcohol/drugs issue, anger management etc:

9:2

If the case were to go to court, I would attend so as not to get into trouble myself however I feel that it would cause even more unnecessary stress and upset. I do not feel that criminally prosecuting xxx will help either of us in any way. I also feel that he has been punished enough through me leaving him and taking the children. I am not scared of xxx and do not feel intimidated by him in any way. He is generally a gentle person who I feel has lost his way a bit. This incident happened as he lost his temper whilst under stress and I feel that he needs help and support not a prosecution. xxx has smoked cannabis since the age of 11 and I feel that he would benefit from a drug programme.

.

Here the victim clearly wants the abuser to obtain help outside of the CJS prosecution system. She is also clear that a prosecution of the abuser would be detrimental to herself. Finally, she states her wish for a drug programme to help with his cannabis addiction as an alternative to a prosecution.

For the following victim, she is working together with the abuser to address the damage caused by means of the abuser reimbursing her the money in instalments. Once again, the victim is clear she never wanted the matter to go to court in the first instance which, were we not policing DV from a positive action framework, she would perhaps not be in the position of having to retract her statement:

32:2

I work as waitress and he works as a chef in the same place. Since he was charged I have seen him at work and had minimal conversation with him- mainly about work. The only conversation we have had about the case was a couple of days after he was arrested when he approached me and offered to pay some money back for the damage caused. I accepted that. He gave me £300 in cash on the same day. I put 150 of that into my account. He has said he will give me another 500 in instalments over the next few weeks. This is to replace the items he has damaged. He is not aware that I am retracting my complaint and does not even know I am at the police station. I have not discussed withdrawing my statement with anyone. It is my decision. I never wanted the matter to go to court.

RJ is a process that allows for solutions as described for victim 32:2 to take place, yet traditionally this has not been applied to domestic violence (Stubbs, 2007). There exist opposing views on the benefit of RJ where some argue that RJ solutions can be found for any crime (e.g., Bazemore & Earle, 2002) and others who view RJ for crimes like DV as being controversial (e.g., Braithwaite & Strang, 2002). From these data, victims express wishes that represent a system such as RJ both in this alternative solutions to CJS required theme and the alcohol theme in the internal group of victims. In the alcohol theme, if the abuser could get help with their issues around alcohol, this would be an appropriate reparation in the victims' minds.

In 2017, the Ministry of Justice, confirmed, that “there can be a place for RJ in domestic abuse cases alongside prosecution” (restorativejustice.org.uk, 2017). The latest version of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime is also clear that victims of all types of crime should be able to access RJ. The Ministry of Justice further confirmed that any RJ in a DV case must always be conducted with a comprehensive and continuous risk assessment and the appropriate safeguarding in place all of which need to be led by experienced and skilled practitioners. The controversy of such a stance on RJ in DV can be found in the media's response to this comment. For example, the Daily Mail, in response to the comments made in parliament ran the following headline: “The violent husbands let off with a handshake: Thousands of thugs avoid prosecution for domestic abuse by simply saying sorry.” (Daily Mail, 28th February 2018). As well as referring to this Daily Mail article, restorativejustice.org also capture the benefits of RJ in DV “*Experiencing intimate partner violence, particularly where there is an element of coercive control, can result in victim-survivors having control over their own lives taken from them. The justice process often does little to address this, with victims of all crime types feeling it does not meet their needs or give them a voice. Many victims want to show the perpetrator that their behaviour hasn't ruined their life. That they're recovering and they're moving on. Restorative justice can be a chance to do that.*” (restorativejustice.org).

We turn now to exploring the internally situated retraction factors.

7.11 Internal retraction factors

These retraction factors, in contrast to more external ones, tend to be based on emotions and feelings towards the relationship and the abuser. Recounting as we saw in the introduction of this chapter, this can encapsulate the way in which those aforementioned police officers view victims who retract their statements, as being governed by their emotions. The sense of agency and robust decision-making shown in the external retraction victims is not always how retraction is construed in policing. While those externally motivated retraction victims used their retraction as a problem-solving vehicle, these victims' retractions represented their forgiveness of the abuser with emotions such as sympathy, pity and self-blaming playing a prominent role in their motivations for retraction.

Retraction represents a change in direction for victim decision making. Given the influential role the positive action policy plays in decision making in general in the CJS, it cannot be argued that the decision to report and provide a statement is taken by the victim in every case of DV. It could be that the victim is heavily influenced by the positive action policy and the police officers in their adherence to this policy. Nonetheless, the victims in this data set made the decision to provide a statement and thereafter, retract their statement. As such this represents a disjuncture in their decision-making process.

Forgiveness has been shown to play a major role in DV victims' decision to return to the abuser (Gordon, Burton, & Porter, 2004). Findings indicate that the attributions women make for their partners' behaviours influence their decisions to return to abusive relationships (Katz, Arias, Beach, Brody, & Roman, 1995; Pape & Arias, 2000; Truman-Schramm *et al.*, 2000). Women who portray their partners as at fault and responsible for the violence they inflict appear to be less committed to, less satisfied with, and more likely to leave their abusive relationships. Translated into decision to retract, the latter type of victims who attribute blame and responsibility of the abusive behaviour onto the abusers would be more likely to retract for external reasons or not retract at all. Conversely, Fincham (2000) showed that the less a victim attributed blame towards their partner for the abusive behaviour, the greater their propensity for forgiveness of the abuser, and the more likely the victim was to be wanting a reconciliation with the abuser.

The internally driven retraction factors are reminiscent of the various components of the cognitive dissonance theory, with a number of possible connections to be made with the theory. It could be argued that retraction occurs as a result of victims constructing their justification of their beliefs internally as continuing to live with the abuse means they have to create a shift towards viewing the abuser with increased positivity as a way of coping with the continued abuse. It could be argued that from reporting to retracting the victim undergoes a shift from external to internal justification creating different motivations in their dissonance and therefore their views and behaviour. Thus, at the point of reporting there exists a shift in their view of their abusers which, as the data reveal, occurs for a myriad of reasons but mostly represents a moment of realisation that something needs to change which triggers the providing of a statement. The behaviour at this point could be said to be externally justified, therefore temporary, hence allowing for the shift in the status quo to the victim reporting the abuser. Taking the pathway from reporting to retracting as representing that from external to internal justification perhaps stands as an example of how cognitive dissonance can influence this particular moment in a victim's decision-making process. Caution needs to be taken, however, in applying the theory as there could be a risk of oversimplification in failing to neglect other components such as behavioural influences not tied to cognitive dissonance (viz. the external factors of retraction, children, etc). Bearing in mind this cautionary note, the theory will be applied to some of the internal factors discussed below. In what follows, the relevance of each of these possibilities will be explored further.

The following five internal retraction factors were identified following a thematic analysis:

- wants the relationship to start again and/or to continue
- shows sympathy towards the abuser
- first time the abuser has been violent towards the victim
- self-blaming
- alcohol (victim/abuser/both victim and abuser)

7.12 Wants the relationship to start again and/or continue

As the personal anecdote at the preface reminds us, the victim wanting to be reunited with her abuser is probably thought of as the most frequently occurring reason for retracting an initial statement. The acceptance of the status of a DV victim is commonly resisted by victims themselves, in the early stages of the abuse (Cavanagh, 2003), due to concepts such as learned hopefulness (Muldary, 1983), a sense of commitment to the relationship (e.g., Rusbult, 1980) and becoming entrapped in an approach-avoidance conflict (Fleury, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2000).

Thus, statements like “If he hit me, I would just walk away and never come back, I would never put up with anything like that” are common utterances I came across when working as a serving police officer when discussing views on DV with some of my colleagues, and also friends and acquaintances outside of work. And yet, in any relationship, thresholds are set and frequently overstepped. Wanting the relationship to start again was the highest occurring internal retraction factor. As highlighted by Fleury, Sullivan and Bybee, (2000), it is easier for most victims to lower their thresholds of what is acceptable and permissible within a relationship than it is to stick with the initial thresholds set up at the beginning of the relationship and as a result have to change their lives accordingly. Doing so enables the relationship to continue. It is evident the victims in this theme are committed to their abuser and the continuation of the relationship. This commitment seems to be fuelled by a sense of loneliness, attachment and hope that things will change and improve.

From a policing perspective, this factor, in my experience, represents the source of the highest level of frustration shown by police officers who see the victim as having the choice and choosing to return to the very person they are working hard to bring to justice. This sentiment was captured by a police officer interviewed in a study by Russell and Light (2006): “People who cry wolf over and over again result in police becoming sceptical regarding victims using the system, using police as babysitters, wasting our time, and not realizing how much work they are imposing on us.” (p. 386). Equally, in the same study, victims reported an acute awareness of when their victim status changed from deserving to undeserving: “The first time I called the cops they were really civil, but the third time they yelled at me and told me that I should stay away from my husband and that this was my own fault” (Russell & Light, 2006, p. 386).

What makes one person love another person is a very private matter, but when it comes to loving an abusive person who causes harm to the victim and any children, it then becomes a public matter. The aforementioned public/private debate as discussed in Chapter 2 demonstrates that attitudes have shifted over time to view DV as a public matter requiring intervention. However, for victims choosing to return or stay with their abusers, there is still quite a way to go towards reducing the negativity and improving public discourse. Victims are still blamed when ‘choosing’ to stay in an abusive relationship (Hamilton & Coates, 1993).

The following extract highlights how feelings of still being in love with the abuser can easily shift into expressing self or mutual blame for the abusive incident occurring as a way of justifying the occurrence of the incident:

28:2

I love him to bits, I am just as bad everybody has an argument and I want him back, I don't like living on my own. I do not want the police to take this any further, I don't want to go to court, I have come to the police station today of my own free will no one has put me under any pressure to give this statement.

It has been argued by some that a woman's sense of well-being depends on her relationship with her partner (Mookherjee, 1997). Others contend that a woman's sense of self-esteem is initially created in her role as a daughter and then substituted when she takes on the role as a partner (Gilbert & Webster, 1982). In this light, abuse can be seen by women as a failure in their relationship, something they have created by something lacking (Gilligan, 1982).

Taking cognitive dissonance theory as a framework for this victim's internally driven retraction factor who expresses feelings of loneliness, self-blaming and love for the abuser, could be constructed as an attempt to reduce the sense of dissonance. In doing so, it allows her to view the abuser as someone she loves and as a positive factor in her life that will remain in place. Similarly, expressions of loneliness as discussed in Chapter 5, could be linked to low levels of self-esteem, which in turn are compatible with self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988), as can the declaration “I'm just as bad”. This lack of self-esteem leads the victim to seek out ways of changing her behaviour and to seek an

increased sense of self-worth by returning to the relationship. This return to the relationship, can serve as a way in which the victim builds up her self-esteem.

Interestingly, the feelings of rejection studied by means of MRI scans show the pain experienced to be similar to that of physical injury (Kross, Berman, Mischel, Smith & Wager, (2011). The victim quoted above displays her motive for retracting as wanting to be reunited with her abuser, as she is still in love with him and does not want to be alone. She hints self-blame and tries to normalise the abusive incident as just an argument that everybody has. Isolation and fear of being alone is a strong driving force in most relationship decision-making. Attachment in abusive relationships can be strong (Griffing *et al.*, 2002) making feelings of loneliness an important determinant in the decision to return to the abuser:

48:2

I have thought about xxx going to prison and I don't want this for him. I love him and get upset because he is not with me. We have been through a lot together and I know he needs help as he is so angry all the time. I want to be in a relationship with xxx. I don't want the bail conditions any more as they are stopping xxx from seeing me. I'm not afraid anymore.

The level of investment here is apparent. Despite the abuser remaining angry all of the time, the victim is determined she wants to be in a relationship with him. In a non-abusive relationship, praise would be given to the woman for standing by the man she is clearly committed to. “In sickness and health”, society encourages couples to remain committed, even in desperately hard times. Yet transferring that exhortation to an abusive relationship, and accusations of what is wrong with the victim for not leaving is never far away. In both abusive and non-abusive relationships, the desire to hang onto a relationship is shared for similar reasons, including fear of not finding a better partner and a belief in the ability to improve the dynamics between partners, despite the current state of the relationship (Gager & Sanchez, 2003). In terms of cognitive dissonance, the greater the investment of the victim in salvaging the relationship, the more positive or committed she could be to her abuser.

The victim in the above quote stating she is not afraid anymore also links back to DASH risk assessments in which the expression of fear evinces two

additional points in ascertaining the risk level. Minimising or denying fear can allow the victim to either maintain her relationship or return to her abuser by retracting her statement. For this victim, it seems her need for being with the abuser is such that it overrides other feelings including fear of the abuser. The intermittent level of punishment towards the victim allows her fear of the abuser to come and go according to the ebb and flow of abuse she is subjected to.

7.13 Shows sympathy towards the abuser

Chapter 5 showed that in the victims' feelings expressed towards the abuser, sympathy was a common phenomenon, and additionally in Chapter 6 that sympathy was interpreted as a retraction factor despite there being little difference between NRS (N=2) and NRS=3) statements in this regard. Previous research surrounding sympathy expressed towards the abuser is described in both these chapters. In terms of sympathy for the abuser, a study in US that looked at post-charge, pre-trial retraction (viz., recantation) found that in order to get victims to drop the charges, abusers would employ methods of minimising the abuse and seeking sympathy from the victim to enable the charges to be dropped (Bonomi, 2011). In this study, telephone recordings between abusers in detention centres and victims revealed that abusers used evocations of sympathy stressing how they were suffering and feeling depressed as a means of engaging the victim's feelings of sympathy. In doing so, they laid the blame for their current situation on the state and their policies (e.g., pro-arrest policies).

The following victim is exposed to the abuser's vulnerable side in witnessing him cry which, in turn, produces feeling of sympathy towards him:

44:2

I feel sorry for xxx. He was crying yesterday when the police arrived begging me not to open the door to allow him to be arrested. I do not think prison or the courts are the best thing right now for xxx. I believe he needs help with his mental health. He has been traumatised by our children being removed by social services and I feel the police prosecuting him will not assist him or me in any way.

Having their children removed suggests a level of mutual chaos in their lives which results in the victims' feelings of sympathy being heightened. Thus, his suffering of having their children removed is partly her fault and something that they share. It is also clear that the victim is advocating for help to support him with his mental health rather than for the CJS process:

9:2

xxx and I have been together for 5 years and I would describe our relationship as a happy one. We have had a lot to deal with throughout our relationship including the death of our first unborn baby when I was 4 months pregnant about 4 years ago, a miscarriage and the deaths of my grandad, my dad and my mum. xxx has fully supported me throughout these losses and has been a great dad to our children. I feel that everything we've had to deal with has put extra strain on our relationship and the stress of it all is much to blame for what happened. I still love him and it upsets me that our relationship has come to an end. However, I have no intention of taking him back.

In this instance, the bond between the abuser and victim has been strengthened by the collective trauma they have experienced, as well as the abuser supporting the victim when suffering her own losses. The emotional content of this retraction statement is clear and the love for the abuser is expressed. Yet the victim ends by saying she does not intend to return to her abuser, thereby showing that such internal factors for retraction do not necessarily lead to the re-ignition of the relationship.

In both extracts, it is apparent that the feelings of sympathy are intertwined with elements of trauma within their relationship (viz. having children taken away, family bereavements). This could merge into traumatic bonding (Dutton & Painter, 1981), a phenomenon common in DV couples and referred to in Chapter 5. Additionally, placing the blame of the stress on external causes such as miscarriages and deaths in the family whilst praising the abuser for being a great partner and father to their children could similarly be explicated within the theory of cognitive dissonance as a framework for explaining the dissonance experienced by the victim.

7.14 Self-blaming

In the existing literature, two types of self-blame exist, namely, behavioural and characterological self-blame (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). Whereas behavioural self-blame concerns attributions about one's actions being at fault, characterological self-blame involves attributions that the fault stems from one's personality (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). Translated into a typical DV scenario, "I shouldn't have gone out with my friends last night" would be behavioural self-blame, whereas "I know I wind him up" amounts to characterological self-blame. While the former type of self-blame reflects behaviour that can be modified, the latter is something considered to be intrinsic, and thus much harder to effect any change in the future.

Individuals who engage in behavioural self-blame are more prone to look towards the future and adjust their behaviour accordingly to avoid the subsequent victimisation. Individuals who engage in characterological self-blame look towards the past and what it was about them specifically that made them deserving of the negative outcome for which they are blaming themselves. Recognising what type of blame the victim is expressing in her initial or retraction (or both) statement would serve to provide an insight into where the victim situates herself in her abusive relationship. Furthermore, one could hypothesise that eventually those prone to self-blame exhaust their efforts to change the supposedly blameful behavioural displays and look towards the abusers for blame. Returning to the focal point of this thesis, if the police officers obtained a better understanding of whether the victim blamed herself and had more of an insight into the concept of self-blaming in victims, would this serve to signpost an impending retraction statement?

The following extract illustrates self-blame and indications towards a behavioural self-blame in that the abuse occurred as a result of the abuser trying to calm the victim's behaviour down:

54:2

He did push me against the sink and he did have his hands near my throat but this was in order to calm me down as I was screaming and shouting at him for being late, the incident is not as bad as it seemed. Overall xxx has never sexually assaulted me especially this recent incident it was my fault as he was calming me down.

Interpreting this statement in terms of cognitive dissonance, it is clear the victim is trying to reduce the dissonance of having reported him to maintain her positive view of the abuser by shifting the blame from the abuser to herself. In doing so, it provides consonance in her decision making. Thus, his reaction and violence to her was acceptable, which in turn creates consonance with her decision to retract.

The subsequent characterological blame manifests itself in terms affecting her mental health. It is apparent that the victim is trying to reduce the dissonance of loving the abuser despite having reported him; she seeks to achieve this diminution by means of minimising the original abusive incident and referring to her own mental illness as a way of being able to rationalise wanting to return to her abuser.

It seems, as with 54:2, for the following victim, if it was not for her personality disorder the abuse or the removal of the child would not have occurred:

20:2

I feel as though I have embellished what happened due to my illness. I suffer from dissocialised personality disorder which causes me to blame others for things, also the fact I have recently had my daughter removed into care has greatly affected me and I feel I'm partially to blame for this, my daughter being removed. My other reason for wanting to retract is that I love xxx and I hope to get back with him when this matter is over with.

7.15 Alcohol victim/abuser/both

Alcohol is commonly seen as a contributing factor precipitating a violent episode (Flanzer, 1993). Battered women have previously been characterised as holding on to the 'demon rum' hypothesis (i.e., it is the alcohol that is to blame for the violence; Sapiente, 1988). These suppositions are supported by statistical evidence indicating that men commit more severe and frequent violence when intoxicated (Fals-Stewart, 2003). The view that alcohol is to blame is challenged by the finding that most men who are violent when intoxicated are just as violent when sober (Bennett, Tolman, Rogalski, & Srinivasaraghavan, 1994). Regarding alcohol as the agent on which to apportion blame as opposed to the

abuser is a common tactic used by both the abuser and the victim (Katz *et al.*, 1995). However, if the abuser is intoxicated during the offence, it has been shown to contribute to the decision to retract as shown in the higher frequency in the IRS category as well as the study by Robinson & Cook, 2006. The following two extracts exemplify this complex interaction between alcohol and explanations for abuse:

4:2

I cannot remember a great deal about the incident as I had drunk quite a lot of alcohol but I had a small bruise to my leg. Since that time I have considered the matter and have decided I no longer wish to pursue a complaint against xxx as i wish to retract as I cannot remember a great deal about the incident. I was heavily intoxicated mixing drinks with my medication, which I take for depression and anxiety and irritable bowel syndrome.”

30:2

I made a statement to police earlier today about an incident involving my boyfriend last night. I wish to retract that statement we were both drunk and arguing and I don't believe he meant to hurt me. It was an accident.”

Blaming the abuse on alcohol, gives victims space and time within which to remove themselves, and in some cases the abuser as well, from any blame. Accordingly, the abusive incident is due to alcohol and not the victim or the abuser, and if alcohol had not been consumed the abuse would not have taken place. But as extract 4:2 demonstrates, alcohol consumption can lead to self-blaming. Thus, the victim's way of making sense of the incident is to blame the over-consumption of alcohol and if the victim had not drunk so much alcohol, the abuse would not have occurred. On the whole, however, it seems to be used as a mechanism for shifting blame from either the victim or the abuser to alcohol.

Incorporating attribution theory (Weiner, 1972) into the tendency of abusers to externalise blame, those who do so (viz., blame placed on social and environmental factors; see Fiske & Taylor, 1991) are more likely to recidivate compared to those who internalise (viz., blame is assigned to personal traits). Findings from a study of imprisoned alcoholics revealed that abusers were more

likely, in comparison to non-alcoholics, to attribute the blame of their criminality to alcohol (Loza & Clements, 1991). Relating this finding to DV victims, it seems both victims and abusers play equally at the game of externalising the blame of the violence onto alcohol, reflecting the findings in Chapter 6 that IRS statements contained a much higher level of alcohol/drugs intake when combined with previous abuse.

Placing the blame on alcohol consumption allows for externalised dissonance to occur (see Chapter 5 for further discussion). Shifting the blame externally to alcohol allows for the internal justification of the abuser's behaviour and the relationship being positive enough to continue or be returned to.

7.16 First time the abuser has been violent towards the victim

The concept of hope is a strong factor in victims' decisions to remain in an abusive relationship. (e.g., learned hopefulness; Muldary, 1983) even after a prolonged period within an abusive relationship. Hopeful dissonance was discussed in Chapter 5 in terms of the role hope plays in enabling the victim to stay in the relationship despite the abuse. Those periods of kindness interspersed with abuse can create feelings of hope and denial in the victim that the abuser will return to his non-abusive ways or turn over a new leaf. Given this, when the abuse happens for the first time, it is easy to see how forgiveness, hope and complete rejection of the abuser's abusive ways are achieved by the victim. This consideration is articulated in the following two extracts:

32:2

When providing the statement I didn't fully understand the implications behind it. I didn't understand the matter may go to court. The incident was out of character for him. He's never been violent before. I don't think he deserves to go to court. I feel that it was blown out of proportion.

7:2

Since then I have considered everything and no longer wish to pursue any action or prosecution against xxx. I called the police on the day to show him he cannot

hit me but I was not expecting the police to take the action they did. He has never hit me before.

By giving the abusers a second chance and taking action by means of contacting the police, victims are hopeful that the violence will not happen again. In both cases, the first time the violence occurs is coupled with a lack of understanding of the CJS process, possibly due to not having contacted the police previously. Thus, once more, it is advocated that during the initial statement a more comprehensive framework of questions and topic themes should be followed, together with the notions of positive action and retraction being discussed extensively with the victim, especially those reporting DV for the first time. A proposed framework is presented in Chapter 9.

Another factor worthy of consideration is recognising the timing of the abuse in the early stages of the relationship. Early on, it is quite common for the victim to seek strategies that may reduce the violence by engaging in cognitive dissonance, and for the violence to be seen as an anomaly by both parties. Victims' attempts at recognizing the patterns of violence displayed by their abusers occur as a consequence of interacting with the abusers' controlling patterns. In the early stages of an abusive relationship, the typical pattern is one of offering and accepting an apology by the abuser (LaViolette & Barnett, 2014). The shock of the violence occurring for the first time can be such that it is dismissed as a one-off incident, where neither party discusses what has happened (Cavanagh, 2003).

We turn now to the effect children have on the decision to retract. Children are situated almost equally across internal and external retraction factors, which is indicative of the fluctuating role they play on victims' decision-making whilst experiencing ongoing abuse.

7.17 The multi-faceted effect of children

As was evident in Chapter 5, children have a diverse and varied effect on the decision-making process of DV victims throughout their journey in reporting their abusers. They can act as a push or pull factor in determining the decisions ultimately made. Pulling them away from their abusers and pushing them towards the CJS in prosecuting them but conversely children can also have the

exact opposite effect when victims try to keep the family unit together despite the ongoing abuse. Rhodes, Cerulli, Dichter, Kothari and Barg, (2010) highlight the dilemma facing mothers with regard to children when making decisions about whether to leave or stay in their abusive relationships. The desire of wanting to keep the children protected from the ongoing abuse to wanting to keep the family unit together complicated the clarity of any decision-making about their relationship. Additionally, the effect social services had was equally contradictory, with mothers fearing their intervention and impeding decisions to report whilst also desiring their help in protecting the children.

The same chasm can be found in the process of retraction. For both sets of victim responses (internal and external), children can be used as a reason for retracting in a way that is detached from the victims themselves. The study of Bennett *et al.* (1999), as mentioned earlier in this chapter, showed victims retracting due to their discontent of abusers, with whom they shared a child or children, having to face prison.

Consistent with the theory of cognitive dissonance, victims striving to externalise and separate the dissonance around the abuse from themselves amounts to attempts at creating a cohesive unit consisting of their abuser and children continuing to exist together regardless of the abuse. The abuse and the victim become secondary considerations, with the relationship between father and children being very much the primary concern, and one worth sacrificing their own safety and wellbeing for. Victims prioritise their children and the family unit and use it as a reason for providing the retraction statement.

The more externally situated victims seem to remove themselves from the relationship and treat it as irrelevant and as if the abusers' contact with the children needs to continue regardless of what has occurred between them. While children may feature as a reason for retracting the initial statement, it is not necessarily the main reason for providing it. Consider the following internally situated victim:

7:2

Since then I have considered everything and no longer wish to pursue any action or prosecution against xxx. I called the police on the day to show him he cannot hit me but I was not expecting the police to take the action they did. He has never hit me before. We have 4 children: 12, 9, 3, & 2 years old. All the children

miss him very much and xx is a very good father to the children. There are no problems between the children and him. I think part of the incident was caused by xxx being under the stress from his drink driving case. I received no injuries and I'm sure he has now been taught a lesson. I want no further action taken against xxx and will not support any prosecution. I do not want to go to court and it is causing the children problems.

The need expressed here is to return to the family unit, and to ease the distress of the children being separated from their father, a concern at the forefront in the victim's decision to retract. Describing the abuser as a good father and providing an explanation as to why the abuse has occurred, situates this victim more in the internal category for retraction. Now contrast this statement with one situated in the external category:

27:2

Since providing the statement to the police I haven't heard from him. This is unusual as he would normally be phoning me and trying to contact me. I think he has now got the message that I want him to leave me alone. As far as I am concerned, our relationship is over. I'm happy for him to still have contact with the children without me being there. I have had second thoughts about going ahead with the prosecution against xxx. The main reason for this is that I don't want him to go to prison and not be able to see the children. My son is now 5 years old and I don't want him to grow up to think his dad went to prison because of me.

I no longer want to attend court and give evidence against him.

For the above victim, it is clear she desires to remain separated from the abuser, yet she does not want to continue with the prosecution as she wishes for her children to remain in contact with their father.

7.18 Conclusion

This chapter addressed three questions:

- 1) “But I love him”... Is retraction purely driven by the emotions the victim has for the abuser?

Returning to the personal anecdote and some of the police officers’ attitudes captured in my policing days, it would appear retraction can be governed by emotions the victim has for the abuser, but that there are a distinct group of victims who are motivated to retract for non-internal reasons. However, if police officers view victims who retract through this emotionally charged lens, what implications does this bestow upon the process of retraction? It is hoped that the findings in this chapter would relocate retraction into a broader less negative light and equip officers to understand the many differing reasons victims reach in the decision to retract.

Applying cognitive dissonance theory to internal factors of retraction enables a deeper insight into the understanding of victim decision-making in DV retraction. Whilst the application of the theory has been speculative, it is suggested that dedicated research needs to be conducted to test the relationship between it and retraction.

- 2) What are the reasons victims decide to disengage from the CJS?

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, there are a host of different reasons victims choose to retract their statement. Broadly speaking, two distinct categories could be discerned in the data: internal and external. For those victims retracting for external reasons, victims stated largely practical reasons such as ending the relationship, seeking civil law justice and the ending of the relationship being sufficient in itself. For those victims whose reasoning for retraction was situated in the internal category, it was not just emotions of being in love and wanting to return to their abusers that motivated their decision to retract. For some, their statement was a means of administering a lesson to the abuser about his unacceptable behaviour, while for others it was a vehicle for excusing the abuser as it was the first instance of DV (with or without the involvement of alcohol or drug abuse), or because the victims apportioned blame to themselves thereby exposing signs of cognitive dissonance in their decision-making process .

- 3) In furthering our understanding of the different types of victims and their motivations for retraction, what policy implications can be advanced to agencies (viz., police, CPS) involved in this stage of the CJS process?

It is suggested that by recognising the reality and probability of a retraction occurring, this acknowledgement will serve to improve police officers' interaction with the victim from the onset, and as such should provide for a much clearer and realistic understanding of the victim's decision-making process at the moment of providing the initial statement. It becomes, therefore, a pointless exercise to rush in haste for the statement due to the expectation that a retraction statement will follow. It is surely much more realistic to obtain a thoroughly in-depth and grounded impression of where the victim is at in her leaving process and how she feels about it. In acknowledging the possibility of a retraction from the beginning of the interaction with the victim, professionals can then obtain a much more realistic gauge of the 'positionality' of the victim.

It should be borne in mind that the victim, having made the decision to retract, will not always be willing to provide further details other than the bare facts. The provision of a more detailed pro-format or framework detailing how much and what sort of information to obtain from that victim, could ameliorate feelings of frustration and a lack of empathy experienced by the police officer involved, thus facilitating a more thorough investigation of the abuse and the reasons behind the retraction. A framework for obtaining a more detailed retraction statement is offered in Chapter 9, which addresses the practical implications of these three questions.

The most obvious implication from this study is that 'one size does not fit all'. This adage was particularly applicable to the external retraction victims where, for some victims, there was a clear desire to follow the civil route in taking action against the abuser, borne mainly out of fear of attending court. With this in mind, Chapter 8 continues with a detailed and collective overview of the findings on fear in order to provide a more insightful understanding of the role it plays in DV victim decision-making.

CHAPTER 8: Fear and retraction

8.1 Introduction

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 conveyed the multifaceted meaning of fear. The purpose of this chapter is to integrate the findings of fear across the three data chapters, thereby giving greater meaning to the function fear plays in DV decision-making. For police to gain an improved understanding of the concept of fear, across the different stages of a victim's interactions with the CJS and expressed with regard to the abuser, the CJS, or the fear of the relationship ending, would ultimately facilitate a better service delivery in return. These expressions of fear are redolent of a reoccurring notion of fear that captures the varying focal points of fear and the motivational behaviour fear can produce which in turn present a complex conundrum for police and other agencies working with DV victims. By furthering the understanding of fear, professionals engaged with DV victims should be better able to signpost the victim and offer a more tailored form of support around their particular expression of fear.

Victims' fear is focused on two main outcomes: fear of the abuser and fear of the CJS, with the fear of the relationship ending and of loneliness finding expression in both. The locus of fear in turn produces either a facilitative or inhibitive effect on victims' decision-making process. Thus, victims who are in fear of the CJS process tended to show an inhibitive fear in that their decisions to report and/or leave are curbed due to their object of fear (*viz.*, the CJS process). Additionally, inhibitive fear was reflected in retraction statements as expressions of loneliness and fear of the relationship ending (thus retracting for the sake of reigniting the relationship). Conversely, for NRS victims, the higher levels of fear tended to result in a facilitative effect in terms of propelling them towards leaving their abusers and the end point of the CJS process (*viz.*, court) by remaining on board and not retracting. Before considering the more specific fear experienced by DV victims, it is pertinent to begin with addressing the well-researched area of fear with regard to crime in order to understand more fully how it was expressed in each of the previous three chapters.

What follows is an overview of the general notion of fear in the literature, followed by a focus on how it is experienced by DV victims. On this

basis, a model of fear representing the various pathways it can involve in DV is presented. The findings relating to fear arising from the three data chapters are summarised. Finally, recommendations for practice based on these findings around fear are outlined.

8.2 Fear of crime

Criminologists have, over the years, documented the fear of crime as encompassing a broad range of emotions and reactions (Fattah, 1993; Gabriel & Greve, 2003; Hale, 1996; Hollway & Jefferson, 1997; Lee, 2001; Skogan, 1993; Sparks, 1992; Vanderveen, 2007). What is less clear is the distinction between the actors and objects of fear. Thus, is it fear of crime from the perspective of a victim, or that of a witness or perpetrator of crime? Or is the object of fear related to becoming involved in crime or more to the CJS process itself? The distinction was clear in the findings of this thesis in that the object of fear for IRS victims is the CJS process whereas for NRS victims it is directed more towards the abuser. Figure 8.1 displays the possible routes and objects of fear experienced by the three main actors in the CJS process: victims, witnesses and perpetrators.



Figure 8.1. Routes and objects of fear by victims, witnesses and perpetrators. The figure demonstrates the differing fear experienced at various stages dependent upon the actor involved in the process.

Thus, although it is generally presumed the actor is the victim and the object of fear is the experience of crime resulting in becoming a victim of crime, as Figure 8.1 demonstrates there are various possible routes and actors that can be involved in this process as well as in the expression of the fear of crime. The fear can have differing meanings when comparing, for example, a perpetrator fearful of the process of attending court and the humiliation this can bring, to a victim who is fearful of encountering the perpetrator again. Eventually, however, all three actors can develop a fear of process in terms of attending court, but for different reasons.

8.3 Identifying and gauging the fear of crime

Returning to the general discussion of fear in the context of crime, there has been a tendency to treat it as having negative implications for people's lives, as something that is capable of diminishing and adversely affecting the quality of life. There is a dearth of research that addresses fear of crime as a positive emotion, as engaged in risk avoidance, minimising danger, and a means of survival (Fattah, 1993). From a feminist perspective, many including Stanko (1990), have sought to shift the focus from fear to issues of safety and unsafety. In doing so it moves away from the implied sense of fear being linked to passivity and helplessness. Women's sense of being unsafe often involves males as the main focus of this issue. In addition to furthering the function of the fear of crime, attempts at gauging the levels of fear of crime have also proved problematic due to the multifaceted meaning and function fear can assume.

The interest in fear of crime began to materialise with the introduction of questions around fear featuring in the British Crime Surveys (BCS) in 1982 where routine questions such as "How worried are you about being [burgled/robbed/having your car stolen]?" were posed. The responses ranged from very to not at all worried (Gray, Jackson & Farrall, 2011). However, the questions were seen to be misleading as they did not distinguish between concerns regarding past experiences and general worry about the thought of being victimised in any way (Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2011). Criticisms soon arose against the BCS's measures of fear of crime. Critics expressed concern around the lack of an understanding of the incidence of the fear of crime (Farrall & Gadd, 2004) and difficulties in distinguishing between similar emotions

associated with fear such as anger (Ditton & Farrall, 2000). When the BCS introduced the differentiating factor of frequency measures, the results showed respondents had high levels of anxiety, but could not stipulate which crime the anxiety emanated from (Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2008). The question then arises if a person is in fear or worried about crime, but cannot discern which incident of crime has triggered it, then what significance does such fear have and what is the person in fear of? In order to address this general concept of fear, the proactive role of the victim in terms of crime prevention, began to gain traction by the concept of ‘responsibilisation’.

8.4 Responsibilisation

As a mechanism to increase the positive aspect of fear, the introduction of responsibilisation (Garland, 1996) called upon citizens to take a more active, direct role in crime prevention by means such as neighbourhood watch schemes and purchasing security products such as burglar alarms. It is somewhat of a less straightforward concept in cases of DV and is a highly contested and debated issue for many. For example, Grant (2015) argues that if a woman fails to create awareness over the DV she has experienced and does not play an active role by reporting, obtaining restraining orders etc., then the responsibility is seen as belonging to the woman in terms of preventing it from re-occurring. Thus, for DV victims, responsibilisation does not contribute favourably towards shifting or reducing the fear of crime. Rather, DV victims are faced with fear of this intimate crime as well as fear of being held responsible and blamed for the crime occurring.

Despite these added layers of complexity invoked by responsibilisation and fear of crime for DV victims, it is still argued that not all forms of fear are negative or fruitless. As eloquently expressed by Solomon (2006):

But it does not follow from the fact that the circumstances that provoke fear are bad for us that the emotion of fear is bad for us. The circumstances may be bad for us, but fear, as I argued, is good for us, at least when it is appropriate fear (p.174).

Thus, by distinguishing and untangling the difference between the negativity around the object of fear and the emotions produced as a result of the fear, a deeper understanding of the role of fear becomes possible. The emotions produced by fear can have hugely positive and functional effects in the productivity of protecting and shifting the person away from the object of fear, as will be considered more specifically for DV victims later. In viewing fear of crime as both positive and negative, a broader picture begins to become evident in the general literature about the meanings it encompasses, described at times as ‘worry’ that could be constructed as either functional or dysfunctional.

8.5 Functional and dysfunctional worry

Jackson and Gray (2010) construed the sense of fear as worry and differentiate between a dysfunctional worry that diminishes a person’s quality of life and a functional worry that is motivational in producing a sense of security and enables a person to operate an everyday precaution. Of interest here is that it was found that dysfunctional worry was more closely linked to previous victimisation, negating the commonly held notion that fear of crime lacks any rationality (e.g., O’Connell & Whelan, 1996). One reason posited was that the experience of crime may lead to an increased perception of one’s vulnerability. These findings are similar to those reported in this thesis in that IRS victims showed lower levels of fear. However, within their retraction statements in which some retracted for fear of the CJS process, it was evident that they had experienced higher levels of previous abuse. Although a somewhat tenuous link, it serves to demonstrate that previous abuse can impact negatively (thereby in a dysfunctional manner) in terms of victims’ ability to remain engaged with the CJS. However, as will be discussed further on, it is not sought to conceptualise victims who retract in any way as being dysfunctional.

The following section addresses the specific literature on how fear affects victims of DV. This thesis has demonstrated that contrary to the developments in the 90s where it was argued for DV to be treated the same as any other crime, it is evident DV should be considered as a crime different to any other crime for a myriad of reasons. Fear in DV is thus also worthy of

consideration in and of itself as it involves such unique dynamics in the type of abuse and violence, and in the relationship between the abuser and victim.

8.6 Fear and DV

Fear in DV is a complex and emotional conundrum wrapped up in layers of cultural norms such as care and moral duties, coated with feelings of shame and guilt (Montalvo-Liendo, 2009). As with any feelings, fear is also influenced and affected by those around us, and how we perceive society views our particular situation. Emotions are, in this sense, interactional (Bondi 2005). In DV, the influence of others in terms of their receptiveness to the victim's expression of fear is pertinent, particularly those close to the abuser and victim. Similarly, the type of response received from professionals (e.g., police, doctors, third sector agencies) dealing with DV victims can also have an effect (Barrett & St Pierre, 2011; Humphreys & Joseph, 2004). Thus, if the expression of fear is not acknowledged or supported by her friends and family or professionals assisting her, this could make the victim question the validity of the fear she is experiencing. Abusers gain control and instil fear by employing a variety of methods; a common one is where they construct narratives often based on the intimate knowledge they have of the victim, that explain the occurrence of the abuse as being the victim's fault (Hearn, 1996). Thus, re-visiting the notion of responsibilisation (Garland, 1996), the need for confirmation that their fear is valid and the abuse is not occurring due to any fault of the victim is paramount.

Pain (2012) employs the analogy of fear as being an emotion that is embedded as seismologies of emotion. Akin to the study of earthquakes, where major eruptions are the only visible effect of the much smaller movements of the earth's crust that contribute towards these majorly spectacular events. Fear in DV, Pain (2012) argues, is a "Chronic, shifting, largely silent state that occasionally culminates in changes that become visible to a wider public." (p.129). Continuing with the earthquake analogy, victims who resist DV are engaged in a long-term process whereby multiple very small tremors are created, forming shifts that sometimes result in a major, more permanent shift, in terms of leaving their abusers.

Fear in DV is often seen as a disempowering, disabling emotion that creates a feeling of panic, terror and paralyses the victim in her movement and

thought processes. Rarely has it been viewed as a motivational, pro-active emotion, capable of producing change behaviour and a form of activism amongst victims (Pain, 2014). Activism during DV, Pain (2014) argues, forms “Part of a slow, difficult struggle against hegemony that is messy and rarely complete.” (p. 128). Viewing victims as activists moves them away from being seen in the traditional passive light where their behaviour is scrutinised for failing to take the appropriate action and leading towards the blaming of victims for not responding in the prescribed manner (i.e. leaving at the first sign of abuse) (Dobash & Dobash 1992; Enadner & Holmberg 2008; INCITE! 2006).

As can be appreciated from the discussion so far, the concept of fear is often used in academic terms without any particular clarity or insight into what is actually meant with this complex emotion. The connection between fear and other emotions and people’s agency are frequently missed (Pain 2009; Pain, Panelli, Little & Kindon, 2010). For example, an emotion such as courage is not frequently presented within the same context as fear and yet the reality suggests they are close cousins.

The purpose of this model is to facilitate a better, deeper but also more accessible understanding as to how the role of fear manifests itself in victims’ decision- making during their abusive relationships and interactions with the CJS. Key determinants in victims’ decision-making and their relationship with fear centre around whether it is facilitative or inhibitive and whether the fear is centred on the abuser or the court process. When the fear is inhibitive, it can centre around internally driven emotions such as the fear of loneliness or fear of not being able to cope with the isolation created by the abuser preventing the victim from seeing her support network. From victims’ descriptions of previous leaving and

reporting decisions, such fear generates a halt to any further action being taken. Conversely, facilitative fear propels the victim towards making the decision to report/leave and arises from more external factors such as fear of how the violence has escalated beyond a point to which the victim is accustomed.

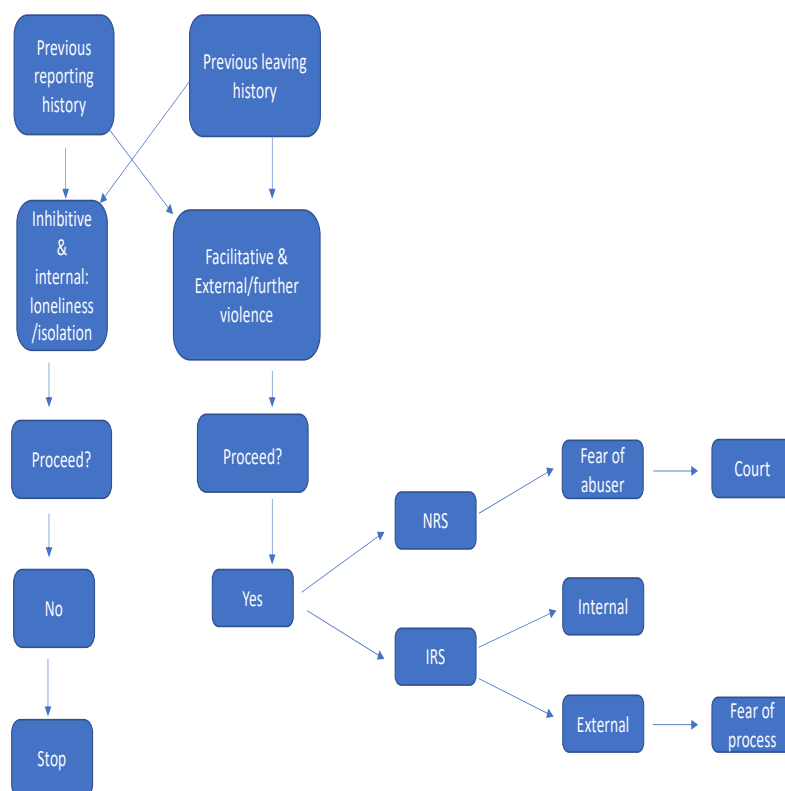


Figure 8.2 DV model of fear. Demonstrates how decisions propel a victim from leaving/reporting decisions dependent on whether the fear is facilitative or inhibitive, which in turn influences decisions to proceed in engaging with CJS or further down the line inform making the decision to retract. Those who show inhibitive levels of fear describe previous incidents where their fear prevented them from taking any further action. In retraction, victims situate their reasons in the external category due to fearing the process of CJS.

Having provided an overview of fear involved in crime in general and in DV in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, demonstrating how this fear manifests itself in the present findings, we turn now to a more detailed examination of the role fear played in influencing victims' decision-making at various key trajectories in their journey from reporting to retracting. Recommendations for interpretation of these varying meanings of fear for practitioners are made at the end.

8.7 Expressions of fear in the initial stages of leaving and reporting, as detailed in victim initial statements (drawn from Chapter 5).

Fear was expressed as a multifaceted emotion across initial statements, mainly present in the leaving and reporting themes. Throughout the themes, fear was

apparent even in those themes and sub-themes that were predominantly categorised as representing a different theme or subtheme. For example, the sub-theme of 'Feeling under control' highlighted how the abuser managed to maintain his control over the victim by means of keeping her in a state of constant fear.

As pointed out by Pain (2012): "Fear is not just a by-product of domestic abuse; it is a key element that keeps it going." (p. 14). The core element to DV is, according to Stark (2007), coercive control, which enables the abuser to coerce the victim by employing tactics such as instilling fear. Stark (2007) proposes that this sense of being entrapped by the abuser was produced by something other than violence, which is backed up by research conducted in Finland (Heiskanen & Piispa, 1998). The study revealed that women who had not been assaulted by their partners for an average period of ten years still demonstrated high levels of fear, depression and other issues. In the absence of any actual or imminent violence, it seems that fear represents a factor not always necessarily connected to the immediate violence per se.

Crawford, Klippax, Onyx, Gault, and Benton (1992) suggest the fear women experience is linked to feelings of guilt and shame. It is argued that in the events of women engaging in submission and violence, a memory of fear is constructed that fear triggers feelings of shame and guilt. This is closely related to fear of victims losing their identity and sense of autonomy as their fear becomes the overpowering emotion felt. Returning to the sense of potential shame felt, Piispa (2002) found that older women experienced shame more so than younger women. Ronkainen (1999) links shame with the fear of loss or rejection, which typically occurs when the person experiencing the shame is dependent on the person causing it. This scenario is emblematic within a DV setting. Continuing with Chapter 5, given these differences in the expression and meaning of fear, the following section examines how fear manifests itself in victims' decision- making around leaving and reporting the violence to the police.

8.8 Leaving (Chapter 5)

Whether decisions around leaving due to the current incident for which the victim was providing her statement, or during descriptions of previous attempts, fear manifested itself as a binary process: fear either facilitated or inhibited the decision to leave. Thus, inhibitive fear either prevented the victim from being able to make the decision to leave or saw them returning to the abuser. The fear was such that returning to the abuser was the less frightening option, despite the abuse and harassment experienced during their previous leaving attempts. For some victims, the intimate knowledge they have built up about the abuser's behaviour, over a period of years, results in a deeply intrinsic fear that inhibits any attempt at leaving their abusers. Intrinsic constructs around fear included fear of retaliation, fear of loneliness, and the unknown away from life with their abusers. For example:

22:1

I saw him the day after this but nothing happened and I only stayed with him because I was frightened, I had no-one else or nowhere else to go.

This quote highlights the inhibitive and internal constructs around her fear of leaving.

There were other victims who appeared to have more extrinsic motivations engendered by fear that at times facilitated decisions to leave. (e.g. violence escalating or changing from what the victim had previously been subjected to). This created a fear that emboldened the victim due to the shock of the change and escalation in violence and facilitated her to make steps towards removing herself from the abuse. For example:

66:1

I have had enough of this relationship and I want to leave xxx. He had no right to assault me or steal and damage my shoes. It is not just what has happened that has upset me I am just terrified of him. He has put me in so much fear over the past year I cannot cope anymore and I have to leave the relationship. I don't want anything else from him. I am so scared.

These decisions to leave when fearful of the abuser were, for some victims, fuelled by the need to protect their children. We return to the effect of children at the end of this chapter.

8.9 Reporting (Chapter 5)

The reporting theme in initial statements represented a pivotal moment in the relationship dynamics between the victim and abuser that produced a mixture of emotion from the abuser in terms of anger and indifference. Fear and reporting produced different emotions from the victims: fear *for* the abuser where the victim shows concern for the welfare of the abuser. For example:

72:1

I didn't report this incident to the police as I didn't want xxx to go to prison so I just put up with it

Fear *of* the abuser in terms of it influencing and affecting her decision to see the report through due to the fear she has of the abuser. For example:

77:1

I have only contacted the police in respect of five incidents. All of these incidents I have never followed through to court because I am in fear of him and his family and what they might do to myself.

Fear also clearly facilitated reporting due to an escalation or change in the type of violence. For example:

113:1

I have explained to PC xxx I have never rang the police before to report such a matter, however I am frightened of what xxx may do next.

Similarly, the feeling of not having any other options available, having reached the cul-de-sac of the abusive road, fear then facilitated the reporting of the abuser as revealed in this quote:

73:1

I have always taken him back in the past but this is the final straw. I honestly believe that if I do not do something about him now then he will end up killing me

The fear of being alone, heightened by the abuser isolating her from friends and family. For example:

22:1

The assaults happened regularly and I reported them to the police but I always dropped the charges; I was scared of what would happen if I went ahead with them I would be on my own if I did as xxx had stopped me from seeing my family and friends.

Finally, there is fearing the reaction and repercussion of how the abuser will react knowing the victim has reported him in terms of providing a statement. For example:

21:1

I realise that by providing this statement that xxx will be very angry with me and it concerns me as to how he will be towards me if he sees me after he's been arrested.

8.10 Fearful of what? How the object of fear influences decisions to retract or remain engaged with the CJS process (Chapter 6)

With reference to Chapter 6 and the findings on fear, the focus was on the important role fear can play in decisions to retract or remain engaged with the CJS process, depending on the object of fear: the abuser or the CJS itself. When comparing differences between NRS and IRS victims, NRS victims showed a higher frequency in the expression of fear than IRS victims. Furthermore, it represented the most prominent difference overall between NRS and IRS victims. One interpretation of this difference could be that the object of fear differed between NRS and IRS victims. Thus, IRS victims, whose highest occurring factor was 'previously abusive', could have constructed their fear around the CJS (over and above their abusers) due to the heightened probability

of having had the experience of previous attempted prosecution of their abusers. In contrast, NRS victims stay committed to the CJS process due to their fear of being directed towards confronting their abusers. This again highlights the dual function fear instils in decision-making: by propelling and facilitating victims towards prosecution of their abusers in order to seek protection (viz., facilitative fear), and by inhibiting victims in their commitment to the CJS due to potential negative previous experiences that engender a sense of fear greater than that of the abusers. As such, inhibitive fear led to the victim retracting.

When combining the factors, however, previously abusive also featured as the most frequently occurring interaction of factors together with high levels of fear for the NRS category, putting into question the effect the previous abuse has on fear and subsequent retraction decisions. Additionally, in the IRS category, high levels of fear and previously abusive ranked as fourth. As suggested in Chapter 6, further research needs to establish in more detail the previous abuse- number of previous incidents, length of time since the previous abuse occurred, any changes in levels of abuse etc.

Overall, the NRS category had four factor interactions with fear and was the top three of interacted factors in the NRS category. The top three factors that interacted with high levels of fear for NRS category were: previously abusive, confronts and stands up to abuser and employed and the fifth highest occurring interaction of factor with fear was reported previous incidents to the police. Apart from previously abusive, these all show the victim as an independent and acting with a sense of agency in trying to make the move away from the abuser.

Figure 8.3 summarises the differences between NRS and IRS with regard to the expression of fear and whether or not the victim retracts. NRS victims were much more likely to already be separated, suggesting that their higher levels of fear for the abuser facilitated separation.

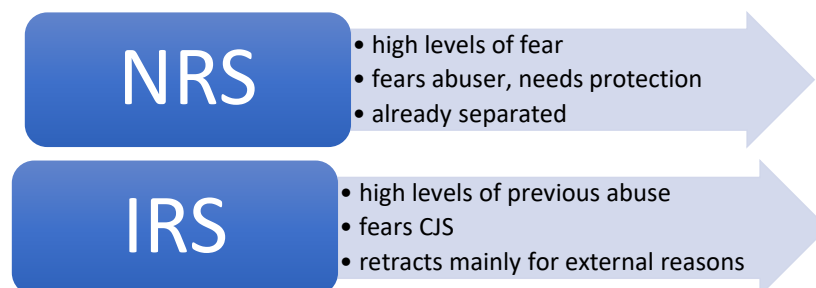


Figure 8.3 Summary of the main differences between NRS and IRS victims concerning fear.

8.11 Fear, retraction and the separation process (Chapter 6)

It was not possible to identify when the victims had separated, which makes it difficult to interpret whether it is the fear of the abuser that triggered the separation or another factor. The fear could still have a facilitative effect in both short-term and longer-term separated victims seeking help from the CJS in terms of protection from the abuser. For example, a victim providing a statement who has had six months apart from the abuser will be experiencing post-separation abuse compared to the victim who has left the abuser by running away from him moments before providing the statement. The latter type of victim could, for example, be more prone to pressures put on her by her abuser and potentially also pressures of internal constructs of fear around loneliness and separating from her abuser.

Similar to the factor of previously abusive, exploring the link between fear and separation is a topic for future studies where the timing and length of separation are both identified, coupled with an estimate of the level of fear. To further understand fear and the separation process, future studies should establish the timing and duration of the separation and explore how fear interacted with victims' decisions to separate. Thus, for example, is there a difference in the nature of fear between those already separated on a long-term basis versus those who have just separated? Exploring this issue would require the confirmation of whether the victim was suffering post-separation abuse or whether she remained in fear of the abuser due to abuse suffered whilst still in a relationship. The pertinent questions are as follows: "Is there a difference in the type and level of fear for post-separation versus current relationship abuse, and how does this affect victims' decision- making on reporting or retracting the abuse?"

We turn now to the role fear played in those victims who had already retracted their statements.

8.12 Remonstrating retraction: But I love him (Chapter 7)

For IRS victims, fear of process threads through Chapters 6 and 7. Scrutinising further the role fear plays in retraction for those IRS victims (32%) who expressed fear, their subsequent reason for retraction was fear of process (assigned to the external factors category). Overall, IRS victims were shown to have lower levels of fear, higher levels of previous abuse, but retracted due to fearing the CJS process. These three elements put together portray victims' decision-making as heavily influenced by fear and their previous interactions with the CJS.

What is not clear is at which points in their journey through the CJS fear is triggered, and for those victims who subsequently repeat the interaction with the CJS whether their fear is triggered at the same point or whether it shifts from one to the other. For example, a victim could become fearful of the CJS process at the point of providing a statement compared to another victim who might experience her fear the day before attending court. The latter scenario was not uncommon in my policing days where I would often receive a request from the victim to retract her statement the day before her case was due to be heard at court. For example, a victim explained her fear of attending court the following way:

2:2

I have now decided I do not want to give evidence in court. I am terrified at the thought of going to court, I have never been to court and I don't want to go. I also do not want to allow my daughter to give evidence, I feel like she is too young to have to go to crown court and do not want to put her in that position.

In other retraction statements, it was clear the fear was directed towards the process of attending court, but not towards the abuser. For example:

13:2

I do however suffer from anxiety and depression which I do not take medication for. If I am ordered to give evidence this would have an impact on my well being and cause me great anxiety. I do not require any special measures as I am not frightened of xxx and I will give my evidence in front of him. I have also been

asked if I will need a restraining order. I do not want a restraining order as I do not feel like I need one. Again, I am not frightened of xxx and I do not think he would ever harm me or the children.

The disparity between fear of attending court and the lack of the fear of the abuser is very apparent here.

8.13 Children and fear (Chapters 5, 6, & 7)

Invariably linked to fear, the factor ‘children’ presented itself as having a dual function capable of spurring on the victim’s decision to report her abuser (Chapter 5) or her decision to retract (Chapter 7). In Chapter 6, NRS victims showed a higher frequency of taking action against their abusers. Some of the main motivations in taking this stance were borne out of the wish to want to protect their children.

As reported in Chapter 7, consideration of children was situated almost equally across internal (N=9) and external (N=10) categories. Those in the external category feared that they or their children would be killed if they did not leave (see also Humphreys & Thiara, 2002). In terms of whether to retract or not, the data were split fairly equally between wanting the children to be protected from the abuse and wanting to protect the family unit and keep it together. For internally situated victims, it was clear they put their children’s perceived need of their father and the reunion of the family unit first and their own and their children’s wellbeing and safety second.

Victims categorised as being motivated by externally driven factors also expressed a wish not to subject their children to the CJS process, in particular the attendance at court, especially for those with children old enough to do so. Additionally, there was a fear of social services, which refers back to Garland’s sense of responsabilisation (1996). Thus, victims gave the initial statement as they feared if they did not they would not be seen to be taking the appropriate action, but then retracted their statement as they did not wish to see the CJS process through. For example:

I did not ring to report this incident and I would never have called the police. It was stranger that called the police who I don't know. I kept saying on the day that I just wanted to go home and settle my children. I also felt a little pressure to make a statement as everyone kept saying whilst I was waiting for the police that if didn't give a statement it would look to social care that I am failing to protect my children. I have no intention to resume my relationship with xxx. I feel that as he was arrested this will have made him realise what happened is wrong.

It is clear throughout the data, that the effect of children within an abusive relationship is multifaceted, adding yet another layer of complexity to victims' decision-making. In general, those victims with experience of the CJS will be aware that the presence of children in the setting of abusive relationships escalates risk levels and results in an increased positive action policy being imposed against them. In essence, the voices of victims and what action they would like to take are somewhat diminished by the presence of children who take priority. Victims with previous exposure to the CJS will be aware that not taking sufficient action against their abusers will result in social services becoming involved who could ultimately remove their children. Yet some victims see their abusers as good fathers to their children and place value on maintaining the family unit over and above their constant fear and need for a non-abusive relationship. By putting the children first in this sense, victims negate their own emotions such as fear and regard themselves and the abuse experienced as inferior to the needs of their children.

The following recommendations for practice are made with the aim of applying an increased understanding of fear in the support offered to victims.

8.14 Recommendations for practice

It is clear from the findings in this thesis that fear plays a central role in victim's decision-making process around reporting the abuse, leaving their abusers, and their subsequent decisions to retract initial statements. Furthering the understanding of the role of fear at the initial and retraction stage of the victims' journey could therefore be beneficial to police and other practitioners. This more

developed understanding of fear around leaving, reporting, and retraction decisions could translate into the following recommendations:

1. Offer those who appear to be experiencing an inhibitive sense of fear more safeguarding measures from their abuser in terms of protection orders that can be taken out.
2. To those victims who are experiencing a facilitative fear and are looking for protection, offer advice for keeping themselves secure in their own home, car, work, etc. Personal safety alarms and various target hardening devices could be useful here (e.g., window locks, fireproof letterboxes etc.).
3. Support victims in embracing their reality of living in a dangerous and abusive relationship and affirm their decision to report/leave is the correct one, especially for those with a sense of facilitative fear who are seeking protection from the abuser and are experiencing a 'last-straw' moment. If those services in contact with the complainant are able to inform victims of the abuser's previous offending behaviour by means of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, the question is whether it could also be extended to those whose fear has motivated their decision to report their abusers. Thus, if abusers have a previous offending history with other ex-partners, it would be beneficial that mechanisms be put into place to inform the victim of this in the hope of strengthening her resolution to keep prosecuting her abuser. It would invariably require further legislation to be passed at governmental level, and moreover would not be without controversy.
4. Provide those experiencing inhibitive fear about leaving the relationship, borne out of a fear of being lonely or without support, the means to discuss and contact their support network and offer additional services around victim support. Thus, for example, in the Greater Manchester area there is the Pankhurst Centre Women's Drop-In that runs a weekly service for women affected by DV. Access to these types of services could reduce the fear of loneliness when considering leaving a relationship. Many studies have highlighted the importance of support networks, especially from friends and family (e.g., Barrett & St Pierre, 2011; Humphreys & Joseph, 2004)

5. Consider withholding the victim's statement during the interview with the abuser for those women who fear how the abuser will react once they know she has provided a statement. Routinely, during police suspect interviews, witness statements will be referred to. In a non-DV crime, the identity of the victim can be withheld if it is pertinent to do so, but this is not a possibility in DV.

Consequently, consideration should be given to withholding the fact the victim has actually provided a statement. Being able to offer this to the victim could facilitate reducing her fear in this regard.

6. In terms of retraction, tender possibilities for enabling practitioners to better support the victim prior to and following the point of retraction. In this context, it should promote a further understanding of the object of fear that has been shown to differ between NRS (fear of abuser) and IRS (fear of CJS process) victims. Thus, for IRS victims who have been previously abused and who have had experience with CJS, it is likely that this experience will impact upon their decision-making process if that previous exposure to CJS process was of a negative nature (being summonsed to court, being forced to answer questions, cross examined by their abusers etc). Concentrating on issues such as special measures (screens, video link, etc.) and providing court visits, could facilitate and improve IRS victims' confidence in and opinions of the CJS process.

CHAPTER 9: Reiterating retraction: Summary of main findings and implications for practice

9.1 Introduction

The research contained in this thesis employed a thematic qualitative analysis to examine the decision-making process female victims of DV undergo in reporting and retracting their abusive incidents to the police. In doing so, the following questions were explored:

1. Making sense of the decision to retract: What are the emergent themes evident in an initial DV statement?
2. Are there any salient recognisable differences in the initial statements provided by those victims who continue to engage and those victims who then go on to provide a retraction statement? Of those differences identified, do they form any discernible patterns that would reveal the motivation for the subsequent retraction?
3. Is retraction purely driven by the emotions the victim has for the abuser?
4. What are the reasons victims decide to disengage from the CJS?

In exploring these questions, the previously unexplored narratives of victim statements were analysed to bring forward the main themes both in initial and retraction statements and to explore the differences between those NRS and IRS victims. This chapter discusses the main findings from the three data chapters, the limitations of the research and provides policy recommendations and suggestions for further research.

9.2 Chapter 5: Main themes

The purpose of analysing the initial statements was to establish what themes were contained within a witness statement. What did the narrative captured within the initial statement inform us about victims' thought processes on their abusive relationships? Although somewhat restricted as a written document, the unique selling point of these statements is capturing the narrative of a DV victim who has just encountered an abusive incident. Given this uniqueness of the data, it was of interest to see how statement narratives compared to the existing

literature. It subsequently provided the foundation from which to then further analyse the statements for the purposes of exploring retraction in Chapters 6 and 7. As depicted in Table 9.1, there were five main themes with their corresponding sub-themes that were highlighted in the thematic analysis of the initial statements.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme</i>
<i>1. Reporting (25%)</i>	The last resort: Situating the reporting decision
	Fear
	Escalation of violence/abuse
<i>2. Feelings about the abuser (13%)</i>	Under his control
	Sympathy towards the abuser
<i>3. Dissonance (21%)</i>	Recognition dissonance
	Hopeful dissonance
	Externalised dissonance
<i>4. Victim coping skills (15%)</i>	Awareness of violence signals/behavioural patterns
	Mollification of the abuser
	Proactively coping with the abuser
<i>5. Leaving (26%)</i>	Previous attempts at leaving
	fear
	Exit strategy
	Self-realisation and recognition of abuse

Table 9.1 Main themes and sub-themes, with percentages of occurrence for the main themes.

The narratives contained within the initial statements highlighted important insights into the victims' journeys covering pivotal milestones such as how the abuse manifested itself from the beginning of the relationship to the crucial point of deciding to involve the police (*reporting*). There were differences contained in the initial statements on the trigger points to reporting and obstacles in deciding to report or not. The narratives also provided insights into what led a victim to attempt to leave either successfully or unsuccessfully, and if the latter why they returned (*leaving*). Both the reporting and leaving themes featured

heavily in the data and from a policing perspective are perhaps the most useful in terms of furthering the understanding of what causes a victim to shift from the status quo of an abusive relationship either by making the decision to report or to leave.

The remaining three themes are not, however, to be cast aside as ‘merely’ covering the emotional state of victims. As depicted in Figure 9.1, they are situated in the core of the landscape around the central decisions to leave and report in abusive relationships. In applying a metaphor taken from gardening, the three themes depicted in the middle between reporting and leaving themes can be seen as the seeds of change, without which growth towards reporting and leaving would not occur. These three seeds of change depict also the non-homogenous process that leaving and reporting follow, and the chaos that can be encountered in existing through an abusive relationship. The cognitive dissonance theory is applied to offer a theoretical framework from which to understand the turmoil encountered in some of the decisions victims were faced with.

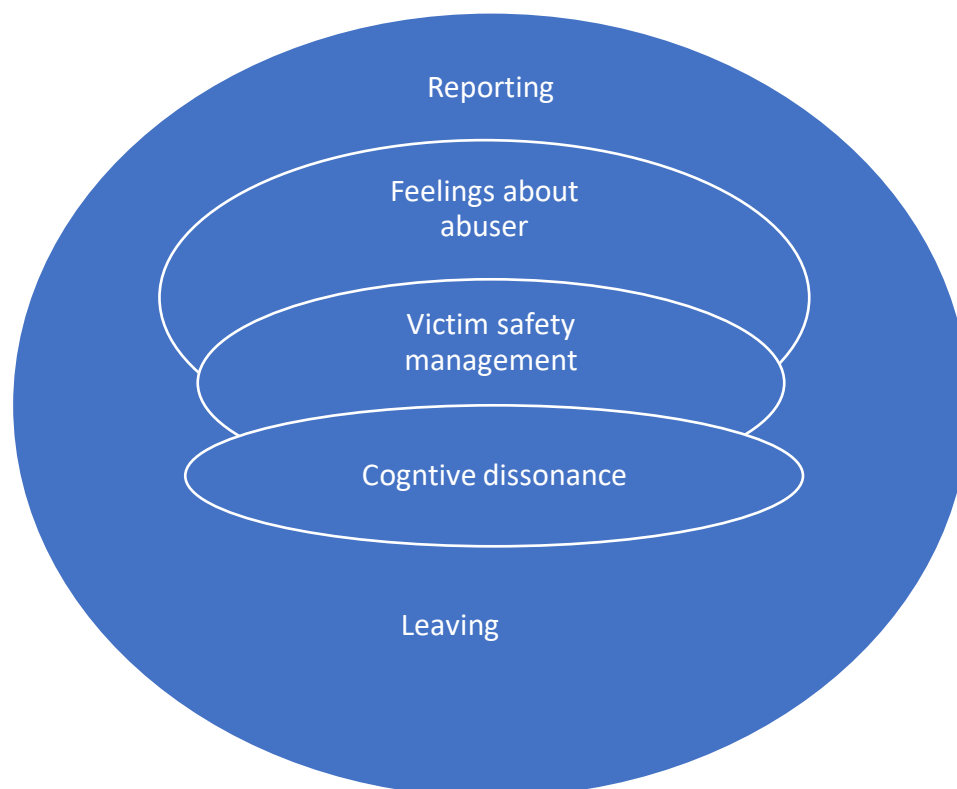


Figure 9.1. Depicting the interaction among the five themes of Chapter 5.

9.3 Chapter 6: Main themes

Differences were found between those initial statements that did not result in a subsequent retraction (NRS) and those in which a retraction was made (IRS).

There were eight main differences that could be ordered in terms of the highest to the lowest percentage differences between these two classes of victims as depicted once more in Table 9.2.

Factor	NRS	IRS	Difference
1) High levels of fear	57%	30%	27%
2) Already separated	33%	11%	22%
3) Employed	55%	33%	22%
4) Unable to stand up to abuser	31%	18%	13%
5) Consistency in reporting	14%	2%	12%
6) Previously abusive	53%	65%	12%
7) Taking action to remove abuser	14%	2%	12%
8) Alcohol/drugs	29%	33%	4%

Table 9.2. Percentage differences between the contents of NRS and IRS initial statements.

A further analysis on the frequency of the interaction of factors and how these compared across the NRS and IRS category revealed additional layers of differences and similarities in the frequency of the interactions as depicted in Table 9.3.

	NRS %	IRS %	Difference in % NRS & IRS
Damaging Duo & Previously abusive	10%	30%	20%
High levels of fear & Employed	31%	15%	16%
High levels of fear & reported previous incidents to the police	25%	11%	14%
Previously unreported abusive incidents & previously abusive	18%	28%	10%
High levels of fear & Previously abusive	31%	22%	9%
Employed & Reported previous incidents to police	18%	11%	7%

Table 9.3: Top 6 NRS and IRS factors combined- in order of difference achieved.

Chapter 6 served to explore whether there were any signs of retraction contained within the initial statements provided by victims of DV. The motivation for exploring them came from a policing perspective of seeking to improve the service provided for DV victims in identifying retraction early on in the reporting process. Equipping officers with ways in which to make an identification as early as possible would contribute towards being able to offer

more support to victims that keep them on board throughout the duration of a prosecution. It does not, however, answer the question of what professionals are able to or should do such that the victim remains committed to the CJS. Moreover, we still need to address what the implications would be of persuading a victim to stay committed to a CJS prosecution.

Providing an insight into what differences and similarities there are between NRS and IRS victims, allows police officers to understand a fuller picture of how DV victims' decision-making and emotions throughout their relationship subsequently interacts with their decisions to retract or not. Thus, the data here demonstrated those victims who were employed and had already separated were more likely to remain committed to the CJS process, whereas those who had suffered abuse previously were more frequently IRS victims. The three themes (employment, already separated and previously abusive) are external components that then interact with the current abusive incident to influence the engage/retract decision.

Conversely, *taking action to remove the abuser* and *unable to stand up to him* are more internalised constructs and represent a response to abuser's behaviour towards the victim. The *inability to stand up to the abuser* was more prevalent amongst NRS cases which construed the role of the CJS as the protector from the abuser. *Taking action to remove the abuser* from their lives and *consistency in reporting the abuse* and *refusing to engage with the abuser* were more commonly found with NRS victims than with IRS cases.

Finally, drugs/alcohol abuse featured quite frequently in the data, but with little difference between NRS and IRS cases. It was the third most frequent factor in IRS but did not feature in the top five for NRS. However, when assessing how the factors interact, the *damaging duo* (alcohol/drugs) and *previously abusive* featured as the highest interaction of factors for the IRS category and as the biggest difference in the interaction of these two factors across the NRS and IRS categories. It would be of interest to establish whether it is the victim, abuser or both parties that are affected by alcohol/drugs to further understand the role they can have on a victim deciding to retract or not.

9.4 Chapter 7: Main themes

Comparing retraction statements demonstrated differences between victims who retract for external reasons and those who did so for internal ones. Table 9.3 summarises these differences.

Factor	Percentage
<i>Fear of CJS process</i>	17%
<i>I just wanted him to stop</i>	7%
<i>Alternative solutions to CJS</i>	7%
<i>Victim ends relationship thereby finding a solution</i>	22%
Wants the relationship to start again/continue	38%
First time abuser been violent	10%
Shows sympathy towards abuser	30%
Alcohol (either victim/abuser/both)	12%
Self-blaming	13%
Children: internal	15%
Children: external	17%

Table 9.4. External (*italics*) and internal (**bold**) factors of retraction.

The purpose in analysing the retraction statements was to explore the issue of why victims retract their statements, which as simplistic as this may sound, has not received much academic attention. Studies addressing the reporting decisions of DV in initial statements have received some attention (e.g., Durose *et al.*, 2005; Felson *et al.*, 2002; Langan & Innes 1986), but that particular moment of post-reporting decision-making that eventuates into decisions to retract has received substantially less focus.

The analysis of 60 retraction statements revealed two categories that situated victims in either ‘external’ or ‘internal’ categories. Externally situated victims framed their retraction decisions around more externally driven concepts lacking emotional content, although not entirely so. Thus, as shown in Table 9.4, externally categorised victims operated with a sense of agency in finding

alternative solutions to the abuse process by ending the relationship or, for example, receiving compensation for any damages caused by the abuser during the abusive incident.

9.5 External retraction factors

The most frequently occurring factor was the victim ending the relationship. Ending the abuse in this way, in turn, resulted in police assistance becoming redundant. Such an outcome produces a dichotomy between the victims' wishes and what research has shown around ending abusive relationships in terms of risk: Women can experience a higher level of violence after they separate (Johnson & Sacco, 1995). Looking at the most extreme form of post-separation abuse, domestic homicide, women are more likely to be killed once separated than those still in the relationship (DeKeseredy, Dragiewicz, & Schwartz, 2017; Wilson & Daly, 1993). Thus, although the more motivated victims seem confident and no longer emotionally engaged with their abusers, their decision-making process seems to lack the informed knowledge that should be available to practitioners, of the consequences of separating from their abusers. It opens up scope for training officers in this respect and informing victims of this from the start of reporting the abuse. In doing so, it may bear on their decision to remain engaged with the CJS process in order to obtain the required protection from their abusers.

9.6 Internal retraction factors

In contrast to the external factors, the internal ones (as seen in Table 9.3) are more situated around victims' emotions towards their abusers, and include those victims who were still emotionally involved with the abuser.

From my own experience, wanting the relationship to start again (the highest occurring internal factor) was considered by my policing colleagues to be the most common reason for a victim to retract her statement. The sense of victims 'choosing' to return to the abusers following the abusive incident, seemed to heighten the sense of frustration of my police colleagues. The wish to return to the abusers arose from feelings such as loneliness, a sense of co-dependency between the abuser and victim, attachment to the abuser and the

relationship, and the hope that things would return to non-abusive times, together helping to ‘normalise’ the incident.

The second most frequently occurring internal factor in deciding to retract was the victims’ way of expressing feelings of sympathy towards their abusers. Victims saw their abusers as vulnerable and in need of getting help. Taking them through the CJS was not a route that would assist their abusers and address whatever issues they had that portrayed them as vulnerable. For others, despite their retracting on grounds of sympathy towards the abusers, they were clear it did not mean they intended to return to the relationship, they just did not want the CJS punishment for their abusers. Closely linked to the construct of sympathy were externalising the blame onto alcohol or victims blaming themselves (i.e. the blame is not to be found with the abuser). Evidence of the cognitive dissonance was found in the internal factors of retraction with the decision to retract representing the victim reducing the dissonance.

The following section makes an in-depth recommendation for revising the statement-taking framework based on the findings of this thesis.

9.7 Proposed framework for obtaining DV statements: The DV Statement Taking Framework (DVSTF)

In order to move away from dealing with the repetitive nature of DV on a statement per incident basis (where one statement is taken to cover mainly the most recent incident), it is proposed to contextualise the victim, the abuse and abuser more comprehensively in the initial statement. The current statement-taking framework is constructed around the PEACE framework that provides a step-by-step procedure for interviewing. This framework has already been discussed in Chapter 1 and 2.

As this thesis has contended, DV is a crime that differs from other crimes on many different levels. Thus, for example, the relationship between the abuser and the victim, the presence of joint children, the location of the offence often occurring within the home setting, the frequent lack of any witnesses, and the ongoing coercion and control that underlie many of the reported and unreported incidents are just some of the dynamics that make a DV incident markedly different to most other crimes. As such, based on the analyses conducted in

Chapters 5, 6, and 7, a framework is proposed to address the divergent dynamics present in a DV crime. Additionally, it addresses the current issue of policing DV on an incident per incident basis and provides suggestions for topics to focus on with the aim of obtaining a statement enabling the police officer to adopt a much broader and improved understanding of how the victim views her current situation, the CJS and her decision-making process both prior to and after the current incident. It is pertinent to stress here that what is proposed is meant to be used as an adjunct to the existing PEACE framework and, as such, it incorporates suggestions for change in content but not on the procedure of interviewing victims. To begin with, the aims of such an amended framework are outlined, followed by procedural recommendations.

9.8 Aims of DVSTF framework

The proposed framework needs to be piloted and tested in cooperation with the GMP, with the aim that it will be incorporated into their procedures for dealing with DV victims. The aim itself in obtaining statements that incorporates this framework is four-fold:

1. Gain more detailed information about the victim, the abuser, and their history.
2. Manage the reality of a retraction by discussing previous retraction statements provided by the victim or discussing how and why a decision to retract might arise.
3. Understand the victim's fears so that a deeper understanding is established of how specific fears affect the victim's decision-making.
4. In obtaining the above, a more realistic understanding of a retraction statement occurring is enabled. Moving forward, if the positive action policy is abolished, a more tailored approach could be offered to victims who, for example, from the start have no interest in following the CJS procedure to the end in terms of attending court.

The difficulties anticipated mainly relate to time constraints. A police officer taking a DV statement often does so in a very constricted time frame. This is particularly pertinent in the current climate of policing when officer numbers are becoming dangerously low. As a former police officer, I am aware that this framework puts even more onus on the responding police officer, particularly in

the initial stages of implementation. However, if it is possible to move away from the positive action policy and offer a more tailored approach, the proposed framework will enable professionals to have a better, more informed idea of how best to support the victim either within or outside of her current relationship. It could also be utilised by professionals working in DV support agencies, charities and organisations such as victim support.

9.9 Suggested modifications of the PEACE framework for the DVFTS

The PEACE procedure as it stands addresses five topics and the proposed DVFTS expands on these topics by means of suggested questions and sub-topics. Table 9.5 demonstrates the incorporation of the DVFTS into the existing PEACE framework. What follows is a breakdown of the modifications to each of the five topics within the PEACE framework for the purposes of obtaining an initial DV statement.

Planning and preparation

Prior to commencing the statement taking, the planning and preparation stage involves creating and recording an interview plan where the officer should consider the characteristics of the interviewee. The information required at this stage could be gathered by a civilian or a police officers on restricted duties (due to injury or illness) to save time for front line officers. For the purposes of a DV statement, it should include:

1. Researching the victim in terms of her previous reporting and any retractions.
2. If she has retracted, what were the reasons given?
3. Does the current offence involve the same abuser in any previous statements obtained or has the abuser changed?
4. Are the abuser and victim currently separated? This information could be made evident in the incident log (e.g., abuser attends victim's house for the purposes or requesting the relationship to recommence).
5. Do they have any children together?

In terms of the abuser, research should be conducted on the number of previous convictions in general and specifically those directed towards the

victim. It should include any evidence of him breaching orders put in place during previous abusive episodes.

In preparing this information prior to obtaining the statement from the victim, it should enable the officer to utilise this information in efforts to keep the victim engaged with her decision to report her abuser. Moving forward, following a successful pilot study, this stage could be incorporated into a software package where the above answers and considerations around the abuser are gathered electronically based on the information available on police computer systems.

Engage and explain

During this phase of the interaction with the victim, it is important to communicate to the victim the importance of providing the officer with all the information pertaining to the abusive incident. The officer should specify:

- 1) The dynamics between the abuser and the victim and any previous interactions with the CJS will need to be fully explored.
- 2) Any previous decisions to retract needs to be discussed here. Thus, if she has previously retracted, explore the reasons for this action and how she views the current situation in terms of her retracting. It is important not to develop any notion of victim blaming during this discussion and to ensure the victim is aware she is able to retract at any given point. If she has not retracted previously, explain the reasons why other victims choose to do so.
- 3) Considerations of time might also be considered here. Returning once the victim has had a chance to overcome the initial shock of the incident, if operationally feasible, could produce a better quality of statement and an improved interaction between the police officer and victim.

Account clarification and challenge

Once the full account has been obtained regarding the current abusive episode, ask the victim to provide a recall of the event, but focus on her fear from the start, during, and after the abusive episode. This will enable further insight into what she is in fear of and offer the opportunity to explore the reasons and motivations for her fear. Summarise the account provided and focus on how the victim sees the future having now reported this abusive episode. How does she view the future of her relationship? What has happened previously following an

abusive episode and is there anything different around this episode that will determine the future of her situation?

Closure

During this phase, it is proposed to verify the information gleaned during planning and preparation to the account just provided. For example, if the victim does not express fear towards her abuser, yet high levels of violence and abuse are present in the most recent and previous abusive episodes, why does she not feel fear? This phase should also provide an opportunity to check the account provided in the statement with facts around the abuser and victim. Thus, for example, if the victim states the abuser has never hit her before and there is evidence in previous incidents that he has, explore the reasons behind her not mentioning these. Doing so should provide an opportunity to tackle issues such as dissonance, and to check whether the timing of obtaining the statement is not proving too difficult for the victim.

Evaluation

This final phase accommodates opportunities such as checking the information obtained in the DASH risk assessment against that contained in the statement match, thereby ensuring any inconsistencies are addressed. Is the victim showing signs of not being fully engaged or is she showing signs of being traumatised? Is she aware of the full extent of her abuser's previous convictions? How does the information provided by the victim compare to any information available on the police computer system? Combining the information contained within the statement and that available on the police computer system, what is the best support for this victim at this particular time of her reporting the abuse?

Table 9:4 details the suggested DVFTS and highlights how it fits within the existing PEACE framework.

PEACE Framework	DV Statement Framework (DVSF)
<i>Planning and preparation</i>	
Create and record the interview plan	<i>Previous abuse</i>
Characteristics of the interviewee	The information here should be obtained from police computer

<p>Practical arrangements</p> <p>Making a written interview plan</p>	<p>systems</p> <p>How many previous incidents, crimes and retractions?</p> <p><i>Abuser</i></p> <p>Previous convictions against victim</p> <p>How many times breached any orders?</p> <p><i>Relationship dynamics</i></p> <p>Already separated</p> <p>Residing in separate/same house</p> <p>Children: Orders, in care, joint care?</p>
<i>Engage and explain</i>	
<p>Identify topics during the interview and, therefore, manage the conversation</p> <p>Communicate interest to the interviewee in their account</p> <p>Identify important evidential information</p>	<p><i>CJS</i></p> <p>What made her call the police today?</p> <p>Has she called the police previously regarding the abuser?</p> <p>What was her experience like on previous occasions?</p> <p>What is it that she wants to achieve today?</p> <p>Does she understand the implications of providing a statement?</p> <p>Refer to the process of retraction; if she has previously retracted refer to why this occurred; if never retracted explain why this could occur.</p>
<i>Account clarification and challenge</i>	

<p>Obtaining account</p> <p>Asking questions</p> <p>Clarifying and expanding account</p>	<p><i>Recap history of abuse</i></p> <p>Current incident: Full recall, events leading up to incident. Obtain full account of assault/abusive incident, points to prove for the relevant offence, how did she defend herself/escape?</p> <p><i>Fear</i></p> <p>Full recall focusing on fear: “Tell me from start to finish of this incident, any fear you felt and how this affected any decisions you subsequently made.”</p> <p>Is she in fear of the abuser?</p> <p>Is she in fear of the CJS process?</p> <p>Is she in fear of the relationship ending/loneliness?</p> <p>How does fear affect her decision-making about the relationship?</p> <p>Does she feel under his control?</p> <p><i>Future</i></p> <p>How does she see the future of her relationship?</p> <p>Does this latest incident indicate the end/time out/one more chance?</p> <p>Is she ready to leave?</p> <p>What support does she need in order to leave?</p>
<p><i>Closure</i></p>	
<p>The interviewer should accurately summarise what the interviewee</p>	<p>This phase could represent an opportunity to verify what the</p>

has said, taking account of any clarification that the interviewee wishes to make.	victim has said with any information obtained in the planning and preparation stage. It is proposed to do so once the main body of the statement has been obtained to optimise the best rapport between officer and victim. Thus, for example, the victim could say she's never felt this afraid before, yet previous incidents show a higher level of violence. This provides an opportunity to discuss what it is about the incident that has created more fear for the victim
<i>Evaluation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determining whether any further action is necessary Determining how the interviewee's account fits in with the rest of the investigation Reflecting on the interviewer's performance 	Here is the opportunity to evaluate how the DV risk assessment correlates with the information obtained from the witness during the statement taking process and to verify as per the closure phase, the information held in police computer systems with what the victim has relayed in her statement. This process could take some time to complete hence a civilian assistant might be best placed to do so.

Table 9.5 DV framework for initial statement taking according to the College of Policing PEACE model for interviewing and statement taking.

9.10 Retraction statement

Whilst the above DV framework for taking initial statements outlines an alternative approach to obtaining information from a DV victim in the hope of reducing retraction statements, it is dependent somewhat on the policy of positive action also changing. Until this occurs, we are faced with DV victims engaging and disengaging with the CJS for various reasons, many of which are outlined and discussed in this thesis. This section collates the main findings of this thesis regarding retraction in DV and applies them to a DV Retraction Statement Framework (DVRSF).

At the point of retraction, the victim is motivated to disengage from the CJS. The retraction statement is taken in order to allow the victim to start the process of disengagement. It is suggested that at this point where we have a motivated victim, more in-depth questions are asked to allow the CJS to better grasp the reasons and motivations for retraction (e.g., what are the events leading up to this point? Are her motivations for retraction situated in the internal or external category?) If the officer feels more engaged with the retraction statement process by posing these additional questions, it might equally improve his/her general demeanour and make the retraction process less frustrating for all concerned. Bearing in mind the findings of Chapter 7 on remonstrating retraction, the following questions might improve the understanding of what has brought the victim to the point of deciding to retract her statement (Table 9.5):

DVRSF
• How do you feel about going to court?
• What is your intention in providing the statement?
• Have you enquired about or initiated any civil measures (such as restraining orders, etc)?
• Are you currently in a relationship with the perpetrator?
• Is this the first time the perpetrator has been abusive towards you?
• What are your feelings towards the abuser at the moment?
• Are alcohol or drugs involved, now or in the past, for the perpetrator or yourself?
• How do you feel about what happened?
• Do you have any children?

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you feel is best for your children? |
|---|

Table 9.6. Questions that form part of the DVRSF

To gain a more in-depth understanding of the two categories of retraction (viz., both internal and external), a longitudinal study is required that follows up victims to determine whether those who retracted for external motivations remain separated from their abusers compared to those who did so based on internal factors. After considering the inherent limitations of the present study, further suggestions for future research are made for considerations in statement taking and the retraction process.

9.11 Limitations of the thesis

Whilst the thesis has made several suggestions for contributions to the current literature on DV victims' decision-making process, limitations should be noted. As discussed in Chapter 4, when conducting qualitative research, extraneous influences exist that can impact upon the data in terms of how it is collected and interpreted. Such influences could lead to criticisms of the research method lacking scientific rigour in not deductively supporting or refuting any possible theories. In addressing these criticisms, it is argued that qualitative research encourages researchers to openly acknowledge any biases and identify any personal stances that could influence the research.

My duality of being a researcher as well as a police officer is relevant from both a positive and a negative stand point. In terms of any limitations it may impose on the research, my analysis could be said to be situated more within a policing framework rather than a social science framework. As discussed in Chapter 4, as a police officer I was trained to take statements that contained mainly facts and the points required to prove the offence in question. There will therefore be some difference between how I approached the data collection, coding and analysis given this training versus how a social scientist without this training would have conducted it.

The main limitation to note is that the data were obtained from written statements without any scope for further exploration by means of interviewing the victims or accessing further information about their previous reporting

history. Reference has been made to the limitation of the way in which DV statements are currently obtained, with a proposal for a revised DVSF and DVRSF. Thus, it follows that this research, devised and constructed on the basis of these statements, is also subjected to that same limitation and any contributions made. However, countering this limitation, one of the main strengths of this research is that such statements have not subjected to empirical research previously. A fuller discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of these issues was presented in Chapter 4.

Ethnicity of victims was not accounted for. Future research should take account of the ethnicity as literature highlights the effects of the ethnicity of DV victims (see Brownridge, 2003; Hajjar, 2004; Parmar *et al.*, 2005). It would also be of interest to conduct a similar study analysing statements, but across different police forces in order to assess if any differences in approaches or quality could be located and to address if any variance exists due to the geographical areas of the police forces.

Finally, the data focussed solely on female victims and male abusers. Although the rationale for this exclusion is detailed in Chapter 4, it does also present as a limitation. As such, future research in this area could address female abusers and male victims, same-sex relationship DV and DV that occurs between family members.

9.12 Future directions

The work contained in this thesis has highlighted emergent themes pertinent in the understanding of the decision-making process DV victims undergo when migrating from reporting to retracting their statements of abuse. Whilst it is natural for any PhD candidate to wish for their research to have some relevance and applicability, I find myself questioning whether the policy implications or proposed statement-taking framework outlined in this thesis would have any beneficial impact towards policing DV. I imagine the first barrier would be for police forces to be open to suggestions of change and in this sense, I am in the fortunate position of having been employed as a police officer. Thus, to move the findings of this thesis forward towards implementation in practice, I have the credentials of having been a police officer (therefore an ‘insider’) to make the

relevant enquiries as to how to go about doing this. This would negate the commonly held view evident in my policing days that any outsiders with suggestions for change in policing practice, do not know enough about the actual “inside” experience of policing to warrant them making suggestions for change.

In terms of the policing approach to DV, conducting this research has led to several questions that remain unanswered that I would like to follow up with further research. Thus, if it is possible to identify a victim who is showing signs of retraction, as has been explored in this study, what should the police do with these indicators? Given the various constraints on everyday policing, is it feasible and indeed possible to move away from a statement per incident basis of policing? How could we best disseminate a more holistic approach to the understanding of a victim’s current position given the abuse she has experienced to date prior to making that crucial phone call to the police? Would incorporating the cognitive dissonance theory into police training aid in their understanding better the decision-making process of DV victims? What would the policing of DV look like without the current pro-arrest policy in place?

Other areas of interest for further studies are mapping the risk level, which could be gleaned from the DASH risk assessment, to determine whether there is any difference in the manner of victims’ responses and coping skills across the various risk levels and whether any interaction exists between risk level and retraction.

9.13 Concluding remarks

This thesis has identified a considerable need for change in the understandings, attitudes and the implementation of policy to DV in terms of initial statement taking and the process of retraction. Thus, I would like to enable the dissemination of these findings into police-appropriate training packages. With my duality of police officer and researcher, my combined knowledge would be beneficial in supplementing police officers’ training in DV. In doing so, it would enable greater understanding of the psychology of victims’ decision-making

process and a critical understanding of the current policy, as well as the origins and current directions of the research surrounding the positive action approach. Ultimately, despite existing in an era of huge cost cutting to policing resulting in a vast reduction of officers, a revised, more effective approach to the policing of DV could result in cost savings and more importantly save lives.

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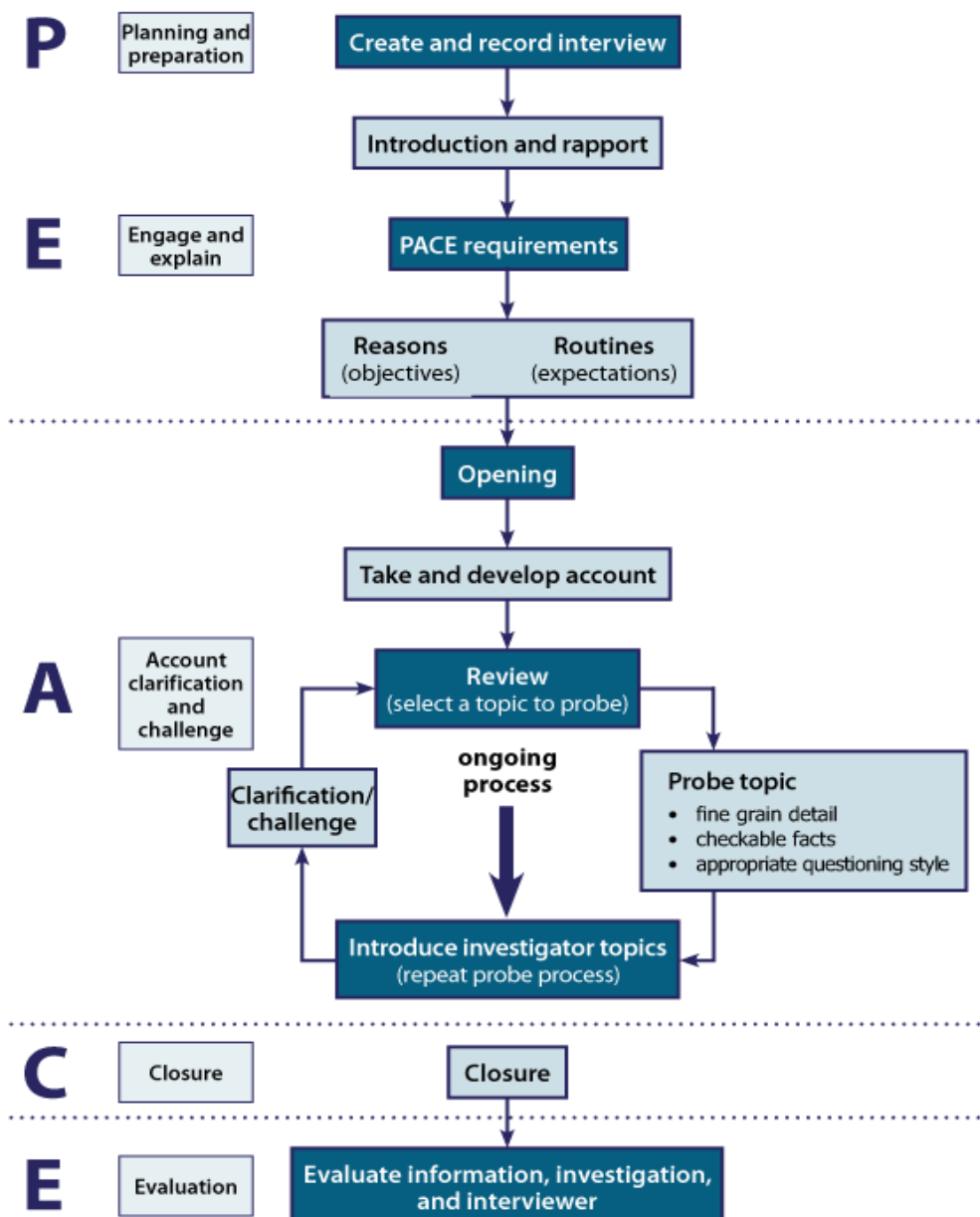
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Domestic Abuse in the Metropolitan Division, Greater Manchester Police: The victim's journey and understanding customer satisfaction.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- The Metropolitan Division is considered high risk of Domestic Abuse (DA) due to poor socioeconomic circumstances and yet only 15,233 incidents were reported 2007-2010, falling 5,233 below force average. This signals an issue of under reporting by victims.
- Fwin to crime conversion rates are low: Of the 3762 DA incidents recorded April-December 2010, only 752 (20%) were recorded as crimes.
- Manchester central divisions (A,B,C) have the highest number of victims not supporting the case (40.6%) April-October 2010, and the Metropolitan Division has the highest overall attrition rate post-charge January-December 2010 (29.6%).
- The Customer Service Desk currently does not cover DA.

Methodology

- In-depth consultations with CPS, IDVA, Manchester City Council and Women's Aid led to mapping of victim's journey onto flow charts highlighting the services offered by Police, CPS, IDVA and Women's Aid across the risk levels (standard, medium, high). See Appendix 1
- 28 semi-structured interviews conducted with victims, sponsored by Body Shop who provided incentives for the victims to participate.
- 37 questionnaires issued to response officers across two shifts.
- Lancaster University's Psychology Department conducted content analysis on the interview transcripts, to identify the most commonly occurring themes.

Three significant findings from a policing perspective:

Risk Level: Levels of satisfaction are affected by what risk level the victims are classified as. High risk victims are the most satisfied as they get the best level of service (DVI's have extensive expertise and act as single points of contact, IDVA engage with high risk)

Crime Recording: Due to GMP conforming to VCOP compliance, victims of DA crimes automatically get assigned a single point of contact in the form of OIC. FWIN only incidents lack ownership/ single point of contact.

Lack of information: Victims attribute this to initially not reporting a crime and as responsible for them retracting their complaint further along their journey point.

Results & Recommendations

Evidence & Defining DA :

Victims: when the abuse formed part of the ACPO definition "psychological, emotional, and financial abuse" victims failed to realise they were DA victims which resulted in them not accessing any of the support agencies.

Police: showed low level of confidence when rating their ability in dealing with DA by means of civil referral pathways.

Recommendation: Current legislation focuses on physical and property based crimes. Standard DA cases are most likely to fall under this part of the ACPO definition and in order to ensure effective service to these victims, more training is required in safeguarding and civil referral pathways to enable officers to deal with these lower level of incidents where harassment legislation is not applicable. Support agencies need to promote their services more in standard risk DA incidents to maximise the number of victims engaging with them.

Reputation of Police & Perception of Self

Victims: Due to the nature of DA, victims are left with low levels of confidence within themselves and many reported fearing not being believed or being blamed for the abuse. Coupled with this, a frequent mention was made of the police having a negative reputation and not taking low-level DA incidents seriously.

Police: Recognised that to reduce the number of retractions more victim support was needed. Conversely, Police officers showed high levels of frustration when a victim wished to retract their statement.

Recommendation: Officers need to show caution in expressing any personal opinions and ensure the reasons for asking any questions to victims are fully explained, thereby reducing any ambiguity which could lead to the victim feeling they are to blame. Any “verbal only” DA fwins should be quality assured by response sergeants. Employing the Customer Service Desk (CSD) to deal with standard and medium DA incidents would enable victims to feedback on how they found the officer’s manner and whether sufficient information was provided by them.

Information

Victims: A lack of information is the biggest barrier to victims not reporting DA due to them not knowing what their journey from reporting it to finalising it at court involves. Similarly, not having a single point of contact able to answer the victims’ questions throughout the process of a DA investigation, contributed the most towards the victims retracting from this process.

Police: Due to their low levels of knowledge on services available from support agencies, officers are failing to refer victims on to these services who are often able to provide standard and medium victims with single points of contacts and any additional information they require.

Recommendation:

- 1) DA fwins currently lack any ownership in terms of an OIC thus standard DA incidents where no crime is recorded could experience dissatisfied victims. Consideration should be given towards how DA fwins are finalised when no crime has been committed .
- 2) SPOC officers on response shifts who have received specialist training in DA would ensure a more effective service in standard and medium DA incidents.

- 3) The requests by victims to have a follow up call should be assessed by triage desk/PPIU/CSD to decide who is best placed to do this (ie response, NPT, CSD, DA SPOCS).
- 4) Need to agree by means of DA Strategic Steering Group on the process of support agencies taking ownership of a DA case and put in place an agreed action plan detailing which agencies are best placed for dealing with different types of DA incidents and what their criteria and thresholds are for taking cases on. This would ensure effective citywide referral pathways.

Satisfaction

Victims: The behaviour and action of police affects victims' decision on retracting and their levels of satisfaction. Victims were satisfied when action taken stopped the abuse they were experiencing. The methods of stopping the abuse (i.e. criminal or civil proceedings) are to a large extent irrelevant to the victim, it is the stopping of the abuse that is the most important to them.

Police: Although officers were favourable towards taking positive action in DA incidents, they only perceived taking positive action as arresting the abuser and not by means of taking any civil pathways either independently or alongside an arrest.

When faced with counter allegations, arresting both parties was the most common way of dealing with this situation.

Recommendation:

- 1) Training officers in alternative ways of taking positive action other than arresting the abuser should be considered, as this would increase satisfaction levels amongst victims thereby decreasing their retraction rates.
- 2) Further guidance and training sessions from CPS should be implemented to cover counter allegations within DA and how to assess injuries on both parties. Counter allegations that lead to arresting both parties are becoming increasingly more common and will undoubtedly contribute towards dissatisfaction amongst victims not to mention time and costs involved in dealing with the arrests of both parties.

Additional training needs identified

- 1) Officers displayed a lack of knowledge in dealing with Child Protection issues in DA incidents.
- 2) Officers displayed a lack of knowledge and rated their confidence as low in dealing with HBV incidents.

Dissemination

- 1) Force Intranet- Serious Crime Division and across other Divisions.
- 2) Brief
- 3) Police Review
- 4) Da Strategic Steering Group

